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ISSUE 165 MARCH 2006

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Reviewed!

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STETCHKOV
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ELDER SCROLLS IV
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What was the
name of the first
Total War game?

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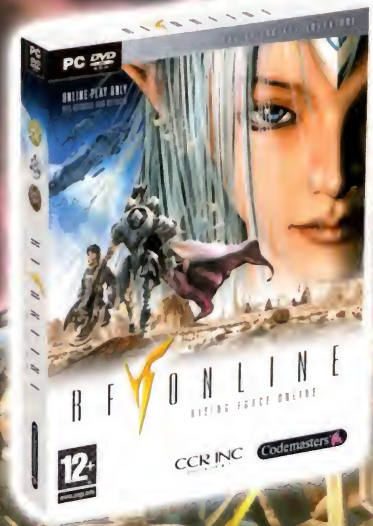
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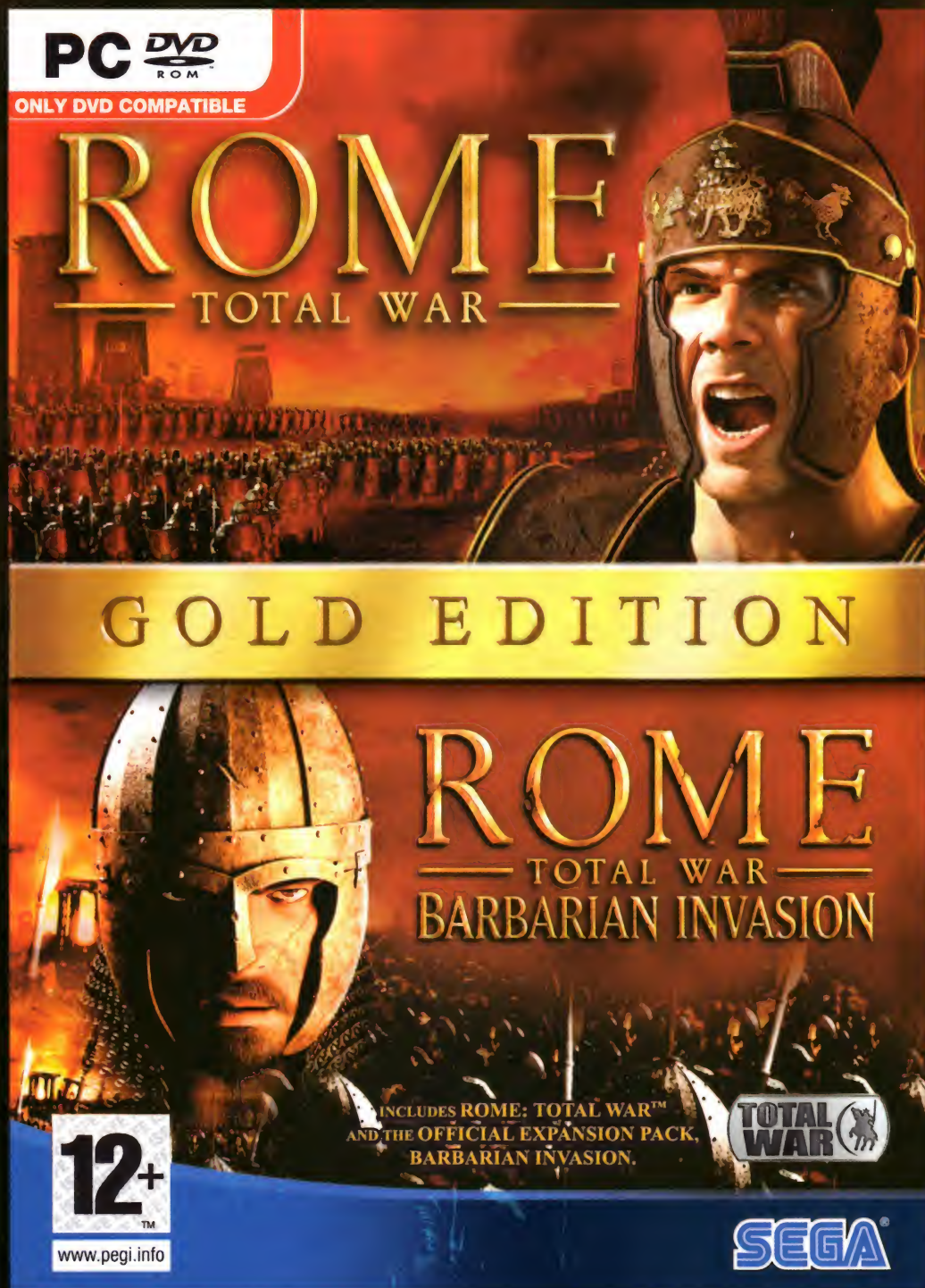


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COVER STORY

50

MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR

*Napoleon: Total War? America: Total War?
Millwall: Total War? None of the above
- we're going back to the Dark Ages...*

DOMINIK DIAMOND 146

Why are there no new TV shows fighting over each other to display *Half-Life 2*?

WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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140 F.E.A.R.

Too busy? PC ZONE in 49 words... Having gawped at the cover, then flicked to the *Medieval 2: Total War* feature and gawped some more - it runs like this: *Empire At War* looking good, the *SWAT 4* expansion is reviewed, while *Crysis* looks amazing. Plus hardware, freeware, freeware and Monolith on how *F.E.A.R.* was made frightening.



CARRY THE WEIGHT

PHEW. I CAN feel a huge weight lifting off my shoulders with the publication of this issue. Well before Christmas I knew we'd secured the world-exclusive first-look at The Creative Assembly's new *Total War* game, but I was sworn to secrecy. I couldn't tell *anyone*. Will Porter would scamper up to me, his eyes gazing in wonderment: "What big cover game have we got for next issue Mr Sefton?" I'd have to turn away, the pain etched on my forehead.

However, soon after new year, I summoned Martin Korda to inform him that he would be the lucky man covering the amazing *Medieval 2: Total War* (page 50). Excited squeals alerted the rest of the team, and so I reluctantly revealed the true magnitude of our scoop, telling them that if just one word got out about the game, I'd personally rip every one of their eyebrows out with my teeth.

Yet, I was still troubled. Unbeknown to them all, I was hatching a plan to not only grab the world-exclusive on the biggest RTS on the planet, but also to wrestle the scoop on *Crysis*, the incredible new game from the creator of one of the best PC shooters ever - *Far Cry*. PC ZONE was the magazine that broke news of Crytek's last masterpiece and the first to carry the exclusive review and demo - it was vital we unveiled the brand-new title to the world. Turn to page 22 for more. The anguish and lip-biting of the past few months has paid off in one of our biggest issues ever - I just wish I could now reveal to you what's in store for the rest of the year...

Jamie Sefton

Jamie Sefton, editor

CRYSIS

WHAT THE FAR CRY CHAPS DID NEXT. READY THE HYPE MACHINE!

22

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a monitor be to capture
a single flutter?



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VX724, Custom PC
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You wouldn't taser an old lady in the face, would you?

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128 FREEPLAY How To... Call Of Duty 2



34 UPFRONT Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers



I'm flying over Arnold Schwarzenegger's house

STEVE HILL'S REALITY CHECK 40



FREEPLAY/FREWARE

Freeware
Steve Hogarty is free and easy. Tell us something we didn't know...

CHOLO
Get ready for some digital love

NEOCRON ARCADE - THE N.M.E. PROJECT
Not willing to fork out several pounds? Try this.

WEDGAME OF THE MONTH
Harold Bishop: The Lost Years

CLOUD
Climb in the back with your head in the clouds and you're gone

DISMOUNT GAMES
Making rapid progress from again

FREE GAMES!

118 FREWARE We want to be free, to - to do what we wanna do. And we wanna have a good time, and we wanna get Freeware

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UPFRONT



MEET THE TEAM

Protecting the universe from the scum of the earth...



MARTIN KORDA
Freelance Destroyer Of Worlds
AGE 27
LIKES Meat, beer, wife
DISLIKES Bear
FANCIES Wife
FAVE GAME *Rome: Total War*
PLAYING? *Tycoon City: New York*
and *Rome: Total War*

He goes by many names (Korgon, Nameslees, Martin, Maaartin! etc), but with a bulk like that – well, you'd think it would take up more than one. This month, Korgon has been sitting Hulk-like in the chair of Paul 'Doesn't work here anymore' Presley, slamming the keyboard with furrowed brow and violently decrying the fact that he gets to witness the greatness that is *Medieval 2: Total War*, but isn't allowed to take it back to his lair. The promise of sending him to Seattle to see another RTS of majestic proportions for next issue calmed him down, as did the meat we left under his desk.



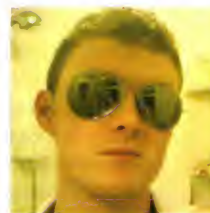
STEVE HOGARTY
Staff Writer
Steve hasn't been evicted once, for a whole month. He has, however, been licking cake off men's fingers and shouting 'get a dog!' at people who already have dogs. Those crazy kids.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
BF2: Special Forces



SUZY WALLACE
Disc Editor
You get tulips in Amsterdam, along with Wallace's yearly bender – the canals ran blue with the language bouncing off every farkin' street corner. It'll be cleared up by the time you read this.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
TOCA Race Driver 3



JAMIE SEFTON
Editor
When not defending his title in the office PES tournament, Sefters has been shouting down the phone and shouting about the people he's been shouting at down the phone. Bless.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Far Cry



ANDY ROBINSON
Staff Writer and Web Man
Looking for all the world like he's just stepped off the *Top Gun* set, the time has come to unveil our new pet. If you put him in a cage with Hogarty, then sometimes they fight!
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Counter-Strike: Source



WILL PORTER
News Editor
In a month that's seen Porter cook, clean and think about physical exercise, we were getting worried domestic life was getting the better of him. Then *Lula 3D* arrived and it all fell apart.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Lula 3D, Stubbs The Zombie



PAUL PRESLEY
Quitter and Surrender Monkey
That's right, the ginger-ninja has left the building. Off to greener pastures new, we wish him well and shed a manly tear. Paul Presley: we hardly knew ye.
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING?
Probably something with trains in it

STUFF THAT'S HELPED US THIS MONTH... Tom Nook, ineffective tube strikes, beer, chocomilk (again) and USB lights
STUFF THAT'S BEEN OF NO HELP WHATSOEVER... Getting up early, the monkey-hating 1930s US military, bees and sandwich shortages

STUFF WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

ANIMAL CROSSING ON DS	352 Mins	'Have you got peaches? I'll trade my cherry for your peaches.'
MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR	251 Mins	The rampant fan speculation is finally over. They're getting medieval on our arses
KING KONG	123 Mins	We laughed, we cried, we even got the promotional Kong cup from the cinema
FACEHUGGERS	9 Mins	We really want to see how one could get an alien into the guts of a cow
WEE JAMIE	100 Mins	What a jagged, unshaven silhouette our former deputy art ed made as he trotted off into the sunset
PREZZER	100 Mins, 2 seconds	You take the good, you take the bad, you take them both, and there you have: Paul Presley
TOWELLING OFF	15 Mins	From getting up, to having a wee, to towelling off – we make it around 15 minutes
JOSSY	23 Mins	That person we know, her Dad WAS Jossy from Jossy's Giants!
LOST	56 Mins	Every Thursday we talk about <i>Lost</i> . Apart from Will and Clare, who don't watch it. And Jamie who covers his ears – he's yet to watch it
SHOCKING NEWS	3 Mins	A disappointing amount of shocking news this month

WIN!

Tiny Compo. Give us the correct answer to the mini-question on the cover and you might win some fabbo prizes. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: Tiny Compo (165), PC ZONE, Future, 1 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NA. The first correct entry laid by the prize competition chicken wins. Closing date: March 1, 2006. The winner of Issue 163's Tiny Compo was Mr James McDonnell Esquire from Country Antrim off of Ireland, who knew that the first Quake game to star the Strogg was *Quake II*. Get him.

GENERAL COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1. Only completed entries received before the closing date will be entered. 2. Winners will be notified by post. 3. No cash alternative. 4. Prizes not necessarily as shown. 5. No correspondence will be entered into. 6. The editor's decision is final. 7. Responsibility cannot be accepted for lost or undelivered entries. 8. Competitions are not open to readers outside the UK or employees of Future or its affiliated companies, their families, agents or anyone professionally connected with the competition. Phew!

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This is a classic action-adventure game which we described as "a near-seamless gaming experience... Ubisoft has kissed a frog and it's turned into a prince". PC ZONE verdict 84%



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Closing date: March 1, 2006

LETTERS

Vent your spleen – *Jamie Sefton* operates...



FREE BOOK = A GOOD THING

I would like to say how much I enjoyed the *Games That Changed The World* supplement included with issue 163 of *PC ZONE*. As a mature gamer of 40, I played most of the games when first released, and *Doom*, *Syndicate*, *Elite* and *Deus Ex* still feature in my top ten all-time favourites. Then I realised that as well as being free with the mag, there are no adverts, hence no obvious additional revenue for you. While I'm sure there's a marketing reason for the supplement, you guys showed that you really are genuine enthusiasts with a love and passion for what you do, and we reap the benefits with the care and enthusiasm

you so obviously applied to the free book. The interviews and comments from the creators of the games were fascinating. Thank you and well done.
Mike Newman

Cheers Mike. The *Games That Changed The World* book did cause our publisher to cry real man tears after realising how much it cost, but we loved being able to bring you a cracking free gift. Hopefully we'll be able to bring you Volume 2 later this year...

DOOM-ED

I'm writing to say that I was astonished at your verdict and rating of *Doom: The Movie*. One star? How did you work that out? The film didn't need that much dialogue in it – they swear loudly and shoot – it's enough for anyone! The gore and violence in it were excellent for the type of movie it is. OK, it may not have had direct links with the game, such as hell opening up, or teleportations and buffer worlds, but you don't need that. I wonder how many other films have zombie monkeys – not demon, but *zombie* monkeys. And how many other films go into the first-person? The ending was excellent too. So I'll just say to you that *Doom* should have been three stars minimum and maybe four-and-a-half stars max. It was well worth the money. SEE THIS MOVIE!

James Burrows

In response to your issue 163 (page 33), please find enclosed my ticket stub from the movie *Doom*, which I was unlucky enough to pay money to see.

"ONE star? You die."

I had originally expected the film to be similar to *Resident Evil*, and thus, naff. I probably should have been more sceptical when the rating was a mere 15, but after expecting an all-out bloodbath with two hours of non-stop gore and ultra-violence, I was left very disappointed. Furthermore, being a biology student, I was very much aware of the film making no scientific sense – injecting chromosomes to get super-human strength is just completely ludicrous. Please could you therefore send me my goodie-bag – although I hope it's not a damp tea bag and/or a soiled copy of *Railway Sim 2006*.

Chris White

We never expected *Doom* to win an Oscar, but it's still a very mediocre film and another nail in the coffin for movies based on videogames. Our last best hope is the Peter Jackson-exec produced *Halo* movie, which should (fingers crossed) be a hell of a lot better.

HAPPY ENDING

So Sefton – you reckon *The Secret Of Monkey Island* has the best ending huh? Hmm, well I reckon *Halo* had a much better finale and *Max Payne's* metaphorical raging-storm-and-sky scraper-antenna-on-helicopter ending was beautifully tied in with the beginning. Special mention should also go to *Another World* and its winged deity of hope. However, there's one I love above all though – *Flashback* (floating through space). I became a man that day. FellaMelad

Good choice – we're featuring Delphine's excellent *Flashback* in Abandonware this month (page 132). Endings to games are so important – after you've spent more than 24 hours hunched over your keyboard, a decent reward is the least you expect. I finished *Call Of Duty 2* over Christmas and although it's a fantastic game, the denouement is worse than the one in *The Abyss*.

WIN!



ONE OF THESE!

You need a good graphics card. We need letters. (Good ones, mind, not rubbish ones like 'PC ZONE rulez, can I have a graphics card please?')

Well, serendipity now! The two needs have collided, right here, right now. Write us a letter today. If it wins Letter of the Month, we'll send you a prize tomorrow. Hurrah!

Letter of the Month

Taking Sides

As the winners of wars tend to write the history books, every WWII shooter has the same storyline – kill the Germans and the Japanese. I would like to play a German soldier. But 'they lost' I hear you say. How can you have a game that you will have to lose to win? My idea would be to use historical battles and engagements where the player has only to survive. A breakout from Stalingrad, for example. If you run away or go to ground too often, maybe a charge of cowardice could be brought or you could be captured by the allies. To win, you would have to return home alive. What do you think?
Mike Tomlinson

I think most companies would consider a game with a Nazi 'hero' as commercial suicide. Saying that, you can play as Nazis in numerous games, including the *Brothers In Arms: Earned In Blood* multiplayer. Also *Über Soldier*, made by German developer JoWoD, has a German soldier as the hero, but the character is opposed to the Nazi regime. Have an über graphics card.

SAY WHAT?

I was astonished at your rating of *Doom: The Movie*. One Star? How did you work that out?

James Burrows on a misunderstood and maligned classic



Your free USB light is probably the best free gift I've ever got with a mag. Just got to check it out when I disconnected my USB cable modem.
G_Man_007

I'm hoping the copy I buy is not going to be missing said gift. Not that I know what it is yet. A Sherbet Dab powered by USB?
liquid_metal

I got a USB vacuum for cleaning my keyboard for Christmas from a mate of mine. It's nigh-on useless, you'd get more suction from an 85-year-old hooker with asthma. Having said that, he also got me a *Family Guy* T-shirt in XL when I wear an M size. I must've done something to mark him off.
Crow555

You haven't gone and ruined the surprise by telling us what it is have you? It could be a USB mug warmer or a pair of vibrating iPod pants!
-Doomus-

Join in the forum fun at www.pczone.co.uk.



PRINCE ALBERT OF PERSIA

I'd just like to say that in the past few issues of your great mag, I've been laughing to myself with comments made by your subjects about smut/porn/whatever you want to call it. However, something blew me away while flicking through the pages of issue 162 – on page 24, in the *Prince Of Persia* story, the said prince is fighting some kind of hell hound, but his, ahem, rude bits seem to be hanging out. Either his belt gave way or your art editor is having a laugh! Keep up the good work.
Ian Jones

Nope, can't see it myself Ian...

PC MY ARSE!

I felt the need to respond to the idiot who you awarded letter of the month to in issue 163 regarding the Xbox 360

being arse. PC gaming is cheaper? What a load of rubbish! I'd be interested to see the specs on this top-of-the-range PC that costs £299, but I bet it has onboard graphics, a Celeron or Sempron CPU and is no doubt totally incapable of running *Quake 4*, *F.E.A.R.*, *Call Of Duty 2* etc.

In my opinion, £209 or £279 for an Xbox 360 represents good value for money if you're interested in running top-of-the-line games in the way that they were designed to be played, as you'd have to spend probably over £1,000 to get a machine that can run these types of games in a meaningful way. I did, but am still buying an Xbox 360. I can't believe you gave that rubbish letter of the month! G Owen

It's certainly true that any PC under £500 won't be top of the range, but you'll certainly be able to play all the games around at the moment – albeit on lower graphics settings. The point that Paul made was that as well as games, with a PC you can also surf the Interweb, write novels, download music/movies/porn, burn CDs/DVDs, run emulators and hundreds of other uses. The Xbox 360 is undoubtedly a very powerful machine, but as Wendy

said last month, the games are pretty underwhelming. With PC-first titles such as *UT2007*, *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* and *Medieval 2: Total War* just around the corner, for me, the PC remains the most exciting and best-value games box.

RAP = CRAP

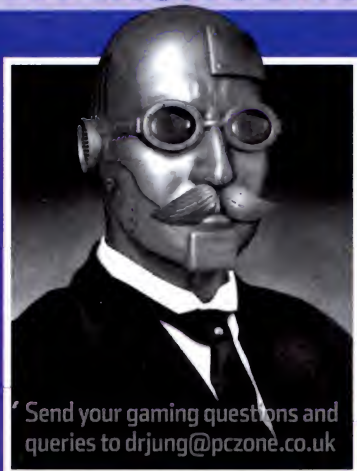
I'd like to award Prezzer everything in my power for his excellent, concise and perfectly-formed diatribe on rap and rappers. These guys have all the appeal of a crusty sock. Well done sir!
bob

I think Prezzer had got out of bed the wrong side when he wrote his stinging critique of gangsta rap in



MY IRON JUNG

For three years ZONE staff members have worked to craft renowned creator of Analytical Psychology, Dr Carl Jung (1875-1961), out of metal. A fount of knowledge, fed with gaming data from past and present, he exists for your enlightenment...



DEAR DR JUNG,

Q What's going on with *Sam & Max 2* then?
JeffC@pes

A Increased inanity at www.samandmax.com and www.telltalegames.com/comics/sammax, coupled with late nights at Telltale towers mean that Sam and Max are well on their way back to the fray. Undoubtedly hitting the Interweb within the environs of this year, it's being made by many of those who worked on the abandoned *Freelance Police* LucasArts project, along with direct involvement from creator Steve Purcell. I'd say it's an odds-on winner. There are rumours of *S&M* appearances in forms other than PC as well. Truly exciting times for dog and rabbit-thing fans.

DEAR DR JUNG,

Q When the ruddy, bloody, ruddy bastard hell is *Aftermath* coming out? Will Alyx still love me?
toomanymonkeys

A To the second: I'm bamboozled. To the first: rumours of an April release had been tip-toeing around the pillar of solid fact like id round the ego. And now April 24 is hailed as the specific date in question. On this same day, the *Half-Life 2* Platinum collection (containing *HL2: DM*, *Day Of Defeat*, *CS: Source* and *Aftermath*) shall set sail. Also, my metal fingers were playing through *HL2* but yesterday, and in Dr Kleiner's lab in the Red Letter day section I found a tiny machine on which I could teleport binders and computer monitors. Ah, truly hidden beauty.

LETTERS



@ letters@pczone.co.uk

✉ letters, pc zone, future, 1 balcombe street, london, nw1 6na

issue 164. However, that was nothing – you should've heard him curse when Will slagged off Fleetwood Mac...

THE ADVENTURE GAME

I've just finished *Fahrenheit*... Twice. What a masterpiece! I've been waiting for ages to play a decent action game that doesn't involve pummelling lead into the faces of aliens, Nazis, zombies or hell-spawn – and here it is. I'm also on my way to the shops to nab myself a copy of *Psychonauts*. It seems that after a few years of FPS mediocrity (don't worry, I still love *Half-Life 2*, *Unreal Tournament* and *Far Cry*), the adventure genre is back with a vengeance. Plus, with *Alan Wake*, *Tomb Raider: Legend* and *Dreamfall: The Longest Journey* in the works, it looks like it's not planning on leaving either. Three cheers are in order then for David Cage and Tim Schafer.

We always love shooting various forms of life in the face in the most violent way possible, but it's always a real surprise and incredibly refreshing when an original and ground-breaking title plops onto our desks, such as the Classic Award-earning *Fahrenheit* and *Psychonauts*. We'll be bringing you more juicy news on *Alan Wake* and the exclusive review and playable demo of *Tomb Raider: Legend* very soon indeed.

IT'S EDUCATIONAL!

Some people believe that nothing constructive comes from gaming. I, on the other hand, believe that you learn a lot – not only from games, but from being a gamer in general. For example, who would know what a nanotechnological augmentation was had it not been for *Deus Ex*? And how many people can say they owe at least some of their IT skills to the information you must know and use to be a successful on- and off-line gamer? Michael

Too true. I learned to type from using an ancient Radio Shack TRS-80 'home

PC ZONE Around the World



PC ZONE living in the land down under.

We want photos of you with PC ZONE in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

computer' in the late '70s, and have since worked out how to pilot an X-Wing, pull off a lethal head shot with a sniper rifle and become a ruthless dictator – all invaluable life skills.

REALISM RANT

I wanted to write in and complain about the PES5 score, but decided not to. Sort of. My beef is this: how come *Pro Evo* got 93 per cent, while *Richard Burns Rally* only got 72 per cent? I know it's a strange comparison, but if you think about it, both are under-licensed games competing against mass-market rivals (*FIFA* and *Colin McRae*), both are painful yet rewarding in equal measure and both are dedicated to recreating their game



sources. I can tell you, if you're not into football games, *FIFA* is a sound option as it's casual, undemanding and has good graphics and atmosphere. I play *Pro Evo* because I love the challenge and because it IS football. Well, *Richard Burns* IS rallying: you can feel the difference in the physics, just like you can with the ball in *PES*. You gave *PES5* a generous score, considering the holes you could pick in it. Ambros

There's one small difference though – *Pro Evolution Soccer 5* is FUN! *Richard Burns (RIP) Rally* is realistic to the point of being a chore. Once you go faster than 50mph, any small pothole in the road will flip your car over. We don't shy away from giving 'realistic' games decent scores, as long as they remain a blast to play.

OH DEAR

My PC won't work and I have *Call Of Duty 2* and *The Movies* waiting for me. Truly this is hell. Will

Don't forget you're also missing out on *Quake 4*, *Civ IV* and *X3: Reunion*! PCZ

IDIOT'S CORNER

Real calls from real idiots...

PCZONE

Hello PC ZONE!

IDIOT

Hi there, I was trying to get hold of the editor Dave Woods?

PCZONE

He doesn't work here any more. Dave left over six months ago.

IDIOT

Oh. Well, I was wondering if you'd be interested in attending a press launch for *Macworld*?

PCZONE

Erm... this is PC ZONE. We're a PC games magazine.

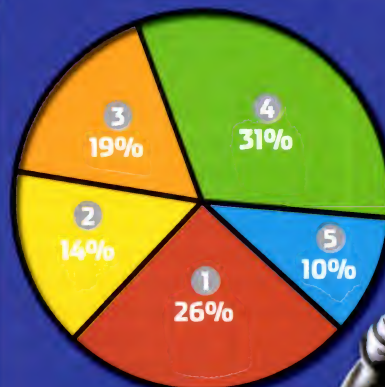
IDIOT

Oh right. Bye then.

hangs up

The Big Question

Most anticipated new gadgets in *SWAT 4: The Stetchkov Syndicate*



- 1 Explosives-laden Aibo 26%
- 2 Up-skirt camera 14%
- 3 Opti-magic wand 19%
- 4 Giant mech suits 31%
- 5 Tarragon spray 10%



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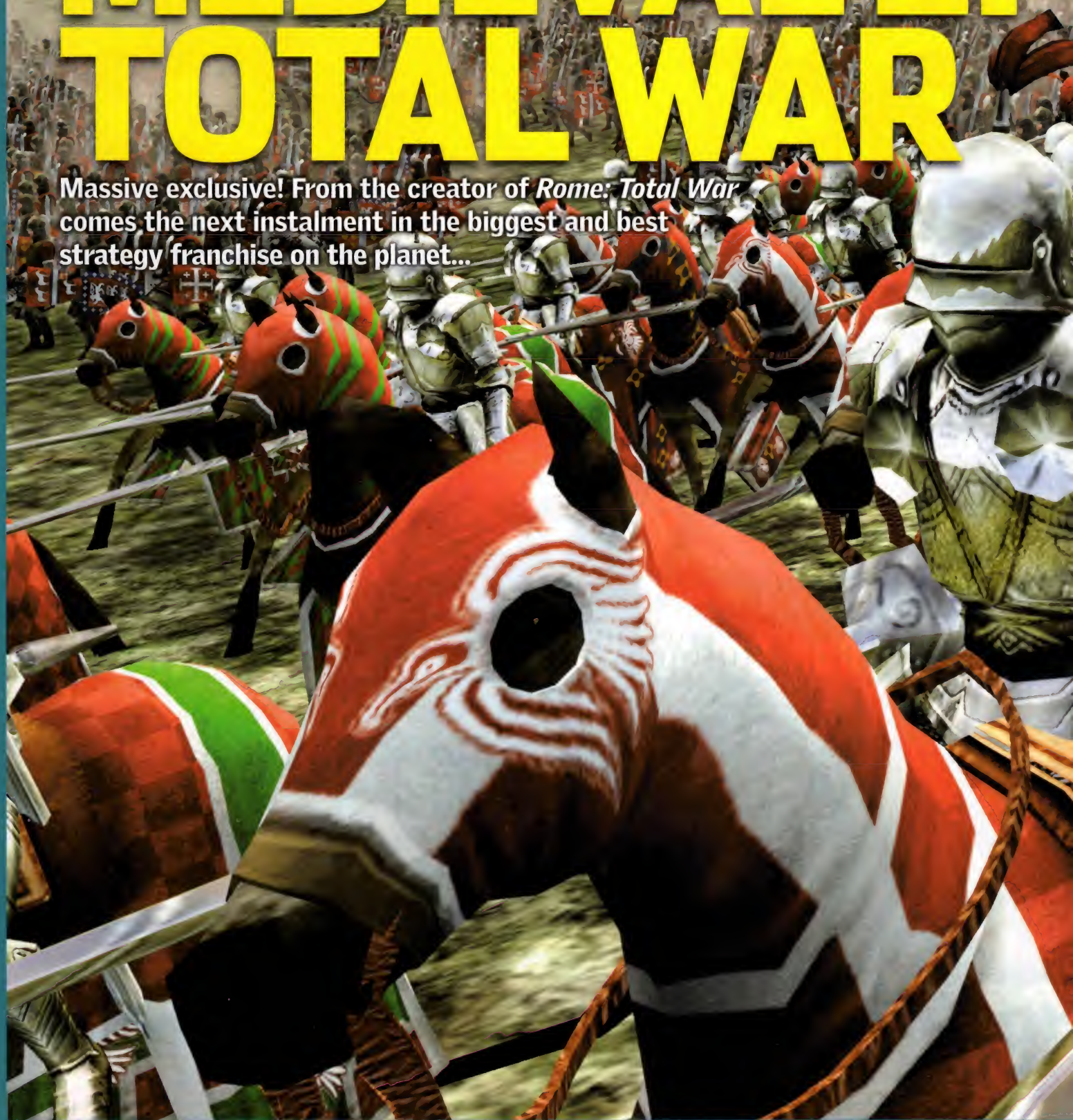
1C
1C COMPANY

COVER STORY MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR

COVER STORY

MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR

Massive exclusive! From the creator of *Rome: Total War* comes the next instalment in the biggest and best strategy franchise on the planet...





WE'RE GETTING RATHER used to bringing you the biggest game exclusives here at *PC ZONE* – and *Medieval 2: Total War* is no exception. Just look at it. Gawp at the thousands of non-cloned soldiers on-screen at once, the phenomenal level of detail (twice that of *Rome*) and some of the most polished armoured cod-pieces in the business. The sequel to *Medieval: Total War* will also feature new units such as Gothic Knights and elephants with mounted cannons, plus a playing area that extends to the Aztec-rich lands of South America. Turn to page 50 now!

PAGE

50



PCZONE

UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

NEWS EDITOR Will Porter

Shut down or restart?

IT WAS TIME. The end was nigh. My trusty PC and I had been through a lot – we'd seen many things, spoken to many people, downloaded all manner of exotic material and even accidentally clicked on goatse. But last week I awoke to the smell of burning electrics. So naturally I ignored it and went back to sleep for two hours seeing as it was a Sunday (and god wouldn't let anything bad happen on a Sunday). Turns out I was wrong. Two hours later the smell had gone, but so had the dearly departed soul of my PC – frazzled by its own guts and a 240-volt power supply.

I took the event as a message from a higher power to get a new PC. A better one: one with a hard drive big enough for more than two games and a graphics card that could run Britain. One that doesn't make strange whirring noises when it's thinking hard and one with a printer! A new tomorrow! A new dawn! A fresh PC! A rethought PC! One that doesn't randomly crash when I boot up MS Paint! A fitter, better, more productive PC that isn't caked in dust and two-year-old flakes of skin! A PC that will not only improve my life, but will improve all our lives. A gaming behemoth that will cause entire nations to quake before its might! Ahahaha! BWAHAHAHA!

Then my significant other reminded me that we were skint, and that I hadn't paid the council tax. So I just bought a new power supply. That worked too.



BEFORE (AND DURING) THE DARK TIMES...

Bored with *Star Wars*? *Empire At War* finds your lack of faith disturbing...

Publisher: Activision | Developer: Petroglyph | www.lucasarts.com/games/swempireatwar



PERHAPS IT WAS the decline of LucasArts, perhaps it was our wavering conviction that *Revenge Of The Sith* was a decent movie, perhaps it was bitter memories of *Force Commander*. But somewhere along the way we lost faith in Petroglyph's *Empire At War* – we stopped feeding the hype machine and idly switched our targeting computer back on. But then many Bothans died to bring us playable code, and it turns out that perhaps we should have been listening to the spectral voice of Alec Guinness all along.

The first thing that hit us was the sheer *Star Wars*-y ness of everything – and we're talking 'proper' and not 'prequel' here.

An R2 unit in the bottom left-hand side of your screen beams in holograms of Imperial Officers or

Mon Mothma, all the villains have chipped British accents and there's an undeniable thrill that surrounds you when ordering your AT-ATs to lumber towards field generators in characteristic fashion.

What really whet our whistle, however, was the interstellar view – which almost takes on a Risk-like boardgame approach as the Empire and Rebel fleets manoeuvre themselves around the galaxy. You can draw ground troops up into orbit, each planet having three slots where you can amass and coagulate your forces, while spending your credits on space stations and armaments to defend your cash-earning solar systems.

Early land battles seem fairly basic (turrets and healing bacta tanks can only be placed in pre-set locations for example), but the planet overview screen is entirely

tactical – and kicks off in true cat-and-mouse fashion, with the Empire having to fire off probe droids in all directions to find out the location of the rebel fleet.

Yes, some *Star Wars* bits and bobs might be hammered home too firmly, with C3PO and R2-D2 stealing technology and the Rebels employing Solo-like smugglers to siphon cash from Imperial strongholds, but overall we reckon in terms of atmosphere, this will be the truest *Star Wars* experience we've seen in a long time.

And the space battles? Well, they're pretty 2D, but as you call in your TIE bombers for an attack run, order your rebel frigates to concentrate fire on a Star Destroyer's nobbly shield generators, or power up the Death Star... With that music going... Well, perhaps we're in for a treat after all.



NOTE the precise laser blasts. Clearly NOT Sand People.



BRING out the winch and cable flying thing!

STOP PRESS!

Shock Block

EA has re-ignited its ownership of *System Shock*, by renewing the trademark in the US. Will *BioShock* have a rival? Wild, unfocused speculation says yes!

OMFG LOTR RPG FTW!

A slice of leaked information reveals a full-on *Lord Of The Rings* RPG called *The White Council* in the works at EA. *Oblivion*-beater? We shall see, we shall see.

Halo 2 Rumours

The ever reliable grapevine has whispered that the PC port of *Halo 2* is in the works at *Brothers In Arms* creator Gearbox. A return for Masterchief?

22

Crysis

Can you keep your head in a *Crysis*? Yup. Can you avoid getting riddled with bullets in one? Nope.



46

Guild Wars: Factions

Everyone's (other) favourite MMO reaches its second chapter. Hill reports from the front line.



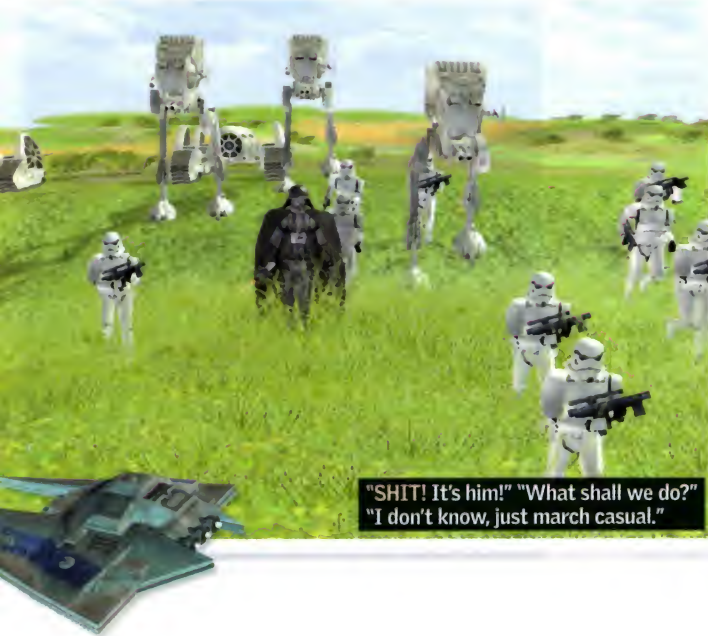
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Medieval 2: Total War

My God. How can something so muddy and violent look so beautiful? Ready arms for the game of the (14th) century!



FORGET Rembrandt, this is real art.



"SHIT! It's him!" "What shall we do?"
"I don't know, just march casual."

MMO For Romero?**John Romero reveals his secret MMO project**

LEGENDARY FPS developer John Romero has exclusively revealed to *PC ZONE* in a recent interview that he's begun work on an MMO with a yet undisclosed development team. Romero was reluctant to go into any sort of real detail on the new project, instead claiming: "I love MMOs and the one that we're doing is very different from many other MMOs for some special reason – it's nothing like you know, I can't really say too much. We're not making a typical game so we don't want anybody to know what we're doing because it's a really great idea."

Coming from the man who gave birth to some of the best shooters in the history of PC gaming (and one that wasn't), we'll be waiting in the delivery room with the forceps for this one. Romero states a gestation period of several years, however. "We spent \$10 million on *Gauntlet*, but this is the most money I've ever worked on with a game," concludes Romero. "It's a big project."

STUFF

Introversion, the company behind *Darwinia*, is about to put your finger on the big red nuclear button in its unique RTS game *Defcon*. In a unique graphical display, apparently inspired by the film *WarGames*, you're tasked with using your thermo-nuclear army to kill more civilians than your opponent. There's even a cheeky 'Office mode', which helps you play the game at work away from the prying eye of your boss.

LIFE IS A ROLLERCOASTER

GOOD TIMES

☺ The office party reminds us what having fun is all about – friends, booze and IT blokes getting dunked in chocolate fountains.

☺ King Kong action figures, garlic baguette holders, socks and Blacksheep Brewery merchandise – we love presents.

☺ Production editor Clare finds a new use for her garlic baguette holder by placing a regular baguette on there.

ON THE FENCE

☹ Suzy has to write a four-page review of a farfakin' racing game lest she miss the big office party.

☹ Tottenham got knocked out of the FA Cup, but only production editor Clare seems to really care.

☹ We mix apple juice and pineapple juice to make a new drink – we've dubbed it PineApple Juice.

IT BEGINS AGAIN

SHIT! HOW LONG LEFT?

DEADLINE



UNREAL tech on a Valve download service? Who knew?

BETTER RED THAN DEAD

Red Orchestra reaches a crescendo

WE EMERGED FROM our encounter with Alan Wilson of Tripwire Interactive with some essential nuggets of information. First, that the man's a walking tank encyclopaedia. Second, *Red Orchestra: Ostfront 41-45*, the fantastic World War II online shooter arriving soon via Steam, is coming along in leaping bounds of progress. Set in the oft-ignored non-American side of World War II, *Red Orchestra's* gameplay focuses on the Russian front, and touts a finely-tuned balance of amazing gameplay and surprising realism.

Since winning the 'Make Something Unreal' competition with the original *Red Orchestra* mod for *Unreal Tournament* and becoming bazillionaires, the team has been hard at work on the standalone version, adding new maps, new vehicles, more detail and more realism. And tanks – lots of tanks.



A realistic gun.



A realistic field.

Attention to detail, while retaining ease of playability, is paramount – climbing inside a tank, you'll be shocked to find just how small a viewing window you actually have and the claustrophobic feeling of being inside a metallic tomb is almost palpable. This is no *Battlefield* experience though, the bellies of these steel beasts have to be filled

with three players or they'll be pretty much useless, while communication between the gunner and the driver is essential.

Guns are similarly accurately modelled. Shoot from the hip with an MP5 and you rarely hit anything more than 20ft away; but go prone and use the sights on a rifle and you can pick enemies off from a distance.

It looks superb too, with beautifully rendered explosions looking far better than anything we've ever seen on the *Unreal 2* engine. Then there's the volumetric sound effects, the true-to-life uniforms that make telling friend from foe harder than you'd think and the ability to steady your gun on walls and corners. *Red Orchestra* is steeped in realism, the fun kind of realism, so expect a more intense and involving experience than *Day Of Defeat*, and a whole lot more tanks too.

www.redorchestragegame.com
ETA: March

THE MAN WHO KNOWS



Jeremy Clarkson's recent declaration on *Top Gear* that playing a racing game on an ageing near-dead console and using a gamepad isn't anywhere near as realistic as driving a Honda NSX at 190mph around a racetrack has been trumped by snooty BBC2 bedfellow *Newsnight*. The late-night news programme bravely decided to broadcast from the infinite confines of massively multiplayer interior-decoration simulator *Second Life*. With a recreation of the *Newsnight* set and digitally rendered Jeremy Paxman and Paul Mason, the team set about commenting on the obvious and the asinine with remarkable aplomb. The programme also exposed a Romanian MMOG sweatshop, in which 18 former farm workers grind through level upon level of *World Of Warcraft* so that fat Americans are saved their vital leisure time.

Meanwhile, mad Swedish people, forced into illegal acts by both the price of beer and the fact that they can't leave their houses during their 24-hour nights for fear of bear attacks, have set up their own political party aimed at trumpeting the goodness of Internet piracy. The Piratpartiet, a party with a name that's a bit like the man who disrespectfully washed his hands in front of Jesus, is currently validating signatures of the public and claims it's well on the way to gaining the four per cent of votes it needs to gain a seat in parliament. From this, it's feared that Sweden, a well-known hub of piracy as well as some blisteringly hardcore pornography, could become the first geek-led western democracy.

Finally, an experimental dance project entitled *Gun Play* has been created by shiftless Americans with nothing better to do. Described by its creators as an immersive 3D videogame experience and an ode to firearms, the dramatic piece sees id guru John Carmack rub shoulders with such luminaries as Robert De Niro, Hunter S Thompson and Clint Eastwood – or at least actors pretending to be them. With projector screens, real-time video and a collection of moribund art-school dropouts waving their arms in the air pretending to be Cacodemons, all three New Yorkers who've bought tickets are thought to be both excited and pretentious.

"It's feared that Sweden, a well-known hub of piracy as well as some hardcore pornography, could become the first geek-led democracy"

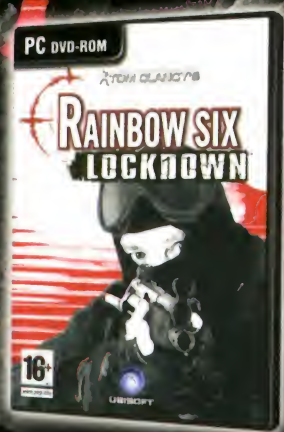
CALL IT A FRIENDLY GATHERING...

... A CHEERY ONLINE BATTLE WITH A FEW OF YOUR CLOSEST PALS. YOU HUNT DOWN A FEW TERRORISTS, BLOW OFF SOME HEADS WITH YOUR SNIPER RIFLE AND USE NIGHT VISION TO STALK EACH OTHER IN THE DARK. IN THE WORLD OF RAINBOW SIX, ONLY ONE RULE OF FRIENDSHIP APPLIES: WATCH YOUR BACK IF YOU WANT TO GET OUT ALIVE.

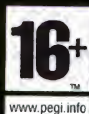


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TOM CLANCY'S

RAINBOW SIX LOCKDOWN

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A DEGREE OF RESPECT

Are games courses one-way tickets to a career or four years of shame on your family?

EITHER *Countdown* is on, or there's a special offer on snakebite down the Student Union.



Reporter
Pavel Barter

COLLEGE DAYS are the best days of your life – it's true. Where else can you sleep in your own filth until five o'clock in the evening,

spend the night swigging piss-cheap pints, then run down the high street with a traffic cone on your head? It's a student's life, not a dog's (although many an undergraduate has been known to nuzzle their own testes). Of course, if you're taking a degree in Advanced Brainy-ology then your college days are not exactly a laugh a minute, so choose wisely young Padawan learner.

How about a degree course where you get to play PC games for four years? "Um, no. Students come here to make games rather than play them," explains Jim TerKeurst, game production manager at the University of Abertay, Dundee. Set straight on that matter, we were surprised to discover that games courses have proliferated across the nation like warts on a witch's hooter.

What's more, they don't teach you how to play *Quake* deathmatch blindfolded, unfortunately.

WORK AND PLAY

The best courses prep students for the games industry – teaching design, production, and other tricks that make games tick. The work is intense, but the rewards can be plentiful. It all began at Abertay in 1998, when *GTA* creator Dave Jones approached

his former college looking for staff. "There was a local need for developers – graduates with a knowledge of games programming, 3D/2D graphics and 3D modelling," explains Henry Fortuna, a lecturer at Abertay. "That need, combined with interest from academics at the university, kick-started the programme."



Abertay's degrees in Computer Games Technology and Game Production Management are amongst Europe's finest, and the college spews its graduates into development jobs across the games industry. But when it comes to the dozens of imitators that have appeared in recent years, Fortuna is sceptical. "To be honest, some of these courses aren't hitting the mark."

Is a games degree really necessary in order to work in the industry? Svengalis like *Black & White*'s Peter Molyneux or *The Sims*' Will Wright never even sniffed these types of courses when they were honing their chops, and they're not exactly stuck for work today. When Philip Oliver, from Blitz Entertainment, began bedroom programming in the early 1980s, this kind of course was unthinkable: "If you mentioned games to anyone in education they spat at you."

Mind you, those teachers laughed on the other side of their faces when Oliver sold his 'O' Level game project for £200 and went on to create old-school classics like *Dizzy* and *Ghostbusters*. "Back then you only had 1kb of RAM to fill, so it didn't take long before the game was finished," he chortles.

SCHOOL OF LIFE

Jason Kingsley, co-founder of Rebellion (*Sniper Elite*), who has a PhD in Zoology, argues that there's "no point in recruiting someone with a degree if they're not enthusiastic about the job. You have to be involved



CITY Scrawlaz: winner of Abertay Uni's 'Dare To Be Digital' comp.

Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)

@ letters@pczone.co.uk
✉ pavel barter, pc zone,
1 balcombe st, london, nw1 6na

nice work, my friend. I suggest you get your vandalising ass out of here before you get nicked.



People of serious talent will most likely succeed whatever their qualification or lack thereof

Peter Connelly, developer, *Age Of Empires*

and impassioned. A degree is useful, especially for a technical post, but it's not the be all and end all."

It's a sentiment which Peter Connelly – the developer behind PC hits such as *Age Of Empires*, *Fighter Ace*, and *Close Combat* – can relate to. "People of serious talent will most likely succeed whatever their qualification or lack thereof, provided they are passionate about the industry. Having a qualification does not confirm future success, certainly not in the creative roles such as design, art, audio, production and dev."



Dario Casali, level designer behind *Half-Life 2*, is an inspiration for bedroom coders the world over. While taking a business degree in England, he began pottering about with level remakes for *Doom*; id got wind of his skills, offered him a contract, and shortly afterwards a baby-faced Valve signed him up.

"None of the designers at Valve have any formal training in game design that I'm aware of," says Casali. "Most have honed their skills through experience and rabid dedication to their craft. Valve considers education as a primary gauge of aptitude, but it's the experience and performance on the day of the interview that are the most important criteria when we decide to hire or not."

IT'S A BIT TECHNICAL

Why then have games courses at all? Well, until recent years techy whizz-



kids had more of an opportunity to get a grounding in game technologies from the comfort of their homes, but today's

development scene is mind-bogglingly complicated. "Graduates need to emerge from university with top-notch C++ skills, being aware of programming, physics, AI, rendering problems, and so on," says Greg Keegan, Climax's developer for games like *Sudeki*.

A cynic might argue that the insane amount of game courses springing up across the UK is because of money-hungry colleges who know that a popular subject guarantees mucho government funding. We would never suggest such a thing, mind. Oh no, not us, but when you're faced with a college that actually teaches David Beckham Studies, there's definitely something fishy going on.



"It staggers me that some of the lecturers behind these courses will admit that they don't know much about game development," continues Blitz's Philip Oliver. "The point is, we're here, come and ask us. If somebody phoned me and asked for advice or a review of the prospectus, we would be happy to do so, but they rarely ask." Keen to nurture young geniuses with a gift for developing, Blitz holds an annual amateur games competition through its site blitzgames.com.

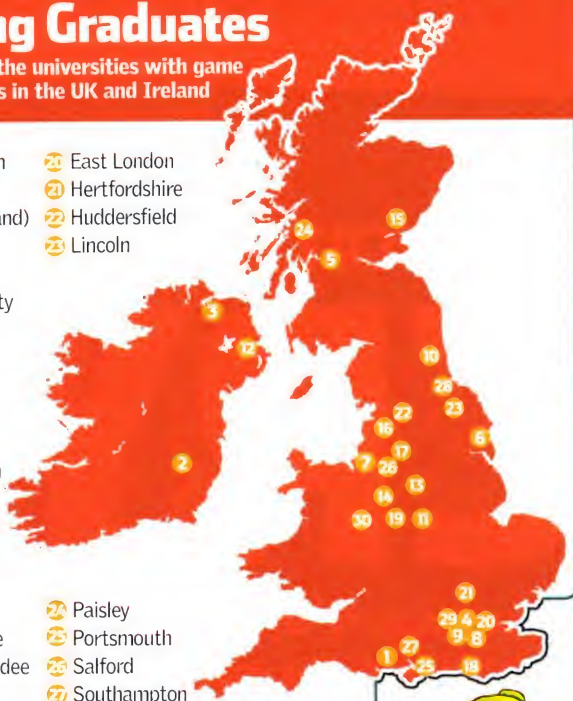
COURSES FOR HORSES

Remember then, don't bother with a college that has no industry ties. Abertay has a constant stream of guest lecturers and work placement programmes, while a new BSc in Computer Games Development at Carlow IT in Ireland was created with a helping hand from physics boffins Havok, Microsoft, and Team 17 (*Worms*). Logitech is also

Gaming Graduates

A guide to all the universities with game degree courses in the UK and Ireland

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Bournemouth University | 20 East London |
| 2 Carlow (Ireland) | 21 Hertfordshire |
| 3 Coleraine (N. Ireland) | 22 Huddersfield |
| 4 City University London | 23 Lincoln |
| 5 Glasgow | |
| 6 Hull | |
| 7 Liverpool | |
| 8 London Metropolitan | |
| 9 Middlesex | |
| 10 Northumbria | |
| 11 Nottingham | |
| 12 Belfast | |
| 13 Sheffield | 24 Paisley |
| 14 Staffordshire | 25 Portsmouth |
| 15 Abertay Dundee | 26 Salford |
| 16 Bolton | 27 Southampton |
| 17 Bradford | 28 Teesside |
| 18 Brighton | 29 Westminster |
| 19 Derby | 30 Wolverhampton |



YOU have to write your dissertation in C++ as well.



clinging on to Carlow's coat-tails, hoping for a horde of graduates who can programme controllers.

A new computer game accreditation programme (www.skillset.org) should weed out traditional computer science degrees that masquerade as game development courses, reckons Climax's Greg Keegan. "Because we have an input into the accreditation process – we visit the colleges, talk to students and staff – Skillset will give the industry confidence that these courses are reaching certain standards. Hopefully

after a year or two we'll see an improvement in the quality of graduates."

Without talent, cojones and a passion for programming, you can forget about a career in the games industry, degree or no degree. "The formula for success is to find what you're most interested in doing, be it art, design, writing, coding, animating, because it's a love for what you do that will propel you beyond most other job applicants," concludes Valve's Dario Casali. Of course, if you're set on a college qualification, a love for cheap ale and traffic cone hats helps too. **PCZ**

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE!****DON'T CRY FOR ME MICRONESIA...**

CRYISIS

Steve Hogarty on the incredible new shooter from the maker of Far Cry...

DEVELOPER Crytek
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE www.crytek.com
PREVIOUSLY IN... N/A

THE LOWDOWN

- Developed by the same guys who made *Far Cry* ✓
- Massive environments ✓
- Extremely impressive AI ✓
- Looks sooooo good ✓
- What's Crytek's fascination with the word 'Cry'? ✗

**ETA
2006**

PUT SIMPLY, *Far Cry* is one of the best first-person shooters ever to exist in the history of the world, and probably a few other worlds too. It's right up there next to *Half-Life 2*, jostling for the tallest bit of the podium, and for many it's the pinnacle triumph of mankind's ability to emulate shooting

people, places and things on a desktop. If you've never played *Far Cry*, put this magazine down, saunter into your nearest games shop, pick up a copy and hit yourself with it repeatedly, then play it. If you have played *Far Cry*, then you know why the people who haven't played it must punish themselves in such a manner. It's a

breathtaking game, both in its graphics and its gameplay – the first time you emerge from a darkened cave in *Far Cry* and see the sheer scope and beauty of your surroundings is one of those special moments in gaming.

PC ZONE was the magazine that championed the game, also grabbing the exclusive review and playable demo before rivals had even heard of it – and here we are again with the world exclusive on *Crysis*, the spiritual successor to *Far Cry*, from German developer Crytek. We're still in paradise, but while similarities with *Far Cry* are easily drawn, you'll soon discover why *Crysis* will be a huge departure from Jack Carver's Trigen-blasting escapades.

SPACE INVADERS

Crysis is set in the near-future, during a period of political (and extra-terrestrial) unease. The action will take place on a beautiful island archipelago, where sci-fi craziness will merge with natural beauty. In



THE Eden Project gets hostile.

THE STORY SO FAR...

CRYTEK



Hallo!

Crytek was formed by Cevat Yerli and Faruk Yerli in Coburg, Germany.



1999

Weiter Schreil

Crytek appears as if from nowhere and gives us *Far Cry*. We like it. A lot.



2004

Das Projekt

Crytek releases an impressive tech demo in collaboration with ATI. Jaws are dropped.

Krisel

Crysis is unveiled and everybody begins to tremble with excitement.



2006



LIKE the village in *Predator*. Without the predator.

the same way that *Half-Life 2* melded the Combine Citadel with drab Eastern Europe, *Crysis* is bringing aliens to the tropics.

The premise of the game is that an 'unidentified crashing into the Earth object' has, as UCITEOs generally do, crashed into the Earth and a large, ominous tower has appeared in the otherwise peaceful island paradise. The North Koreans are first on

the scene, and it's not long before all hell breaks loose (not literally of course, although that has been known to happen before). Enveloping the tower is a massive dome of blue energy – the inside of which contains massively contrasting weather to the usual local constants of sun, sea and sand. The ethereal bubble's icy environments and freezing temperatures



"NO peeking you cheating twat."

We just looked at *Far Cry* and thought, 'hey, let's turn it into a frozen paradise!'

Cevat Yerli, CEO, Crytek

Alien Intelligence Teenage Mutant Ninja Trigen



TRIGENS, your hour has passed.

hint at the possible terraforming intentions of a malicious alien race, or perhaps just global warming arriving with style. Whatever, the North Koreans have claimed the ancestral right of 'first dibs' – and you have to fight through an array of Communist armaments before you can infiltrate the mysterious Snow Globe.

COLD AS ICE

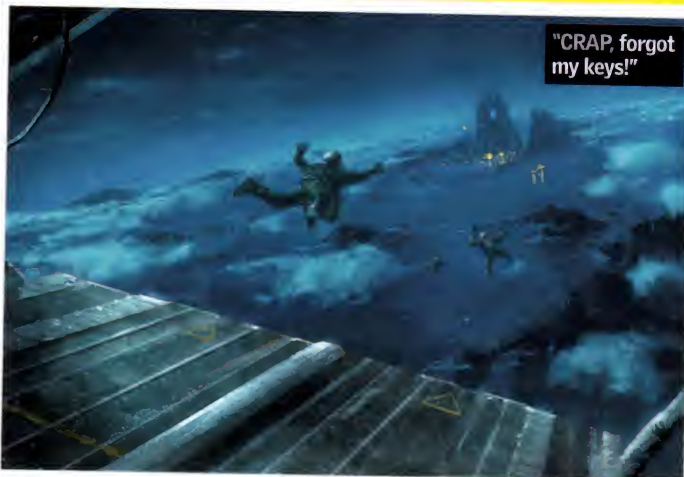
"The game actually becomes a frozen paradise," laughs Cevat Yerli, CEO of Crytek, "which was the codename of the project for a while. We just looked at *Far Cry* and thought 'hey let's turn this place into a frozen



Far Cry's impressive AI was put to good use in the heat of battle with mercenary soldiers on a sun-drenched beach, but we can't help but feel, and we think you'll agree, that the Trigen were nothing more than lethal jacks-in-the-boxes, waiting on every corner to pounce out at you and rip your throat out. Terrifying as they were, they weren't as fun to fight with as the human opponents. Crytek agrees with us heartily, and that's why the aliens in *Crysis* are a bit more intellectual than the Trigen and the humans put together (although we're sure that's a hybrid that we've already killed in *Far Cry*). They won't be spitting wine into buckets and smoking fine cigars, but they will move in formation, flock together and attempt to outwit you.

3... 2... 1... Jump!

Crysis joins the ever-growing list of games with parachutes



"CRAP, forgot my keys!"

Call Of Duty, *GTA: San Andreas*, *No One Lives Forever*, *Battlefield 2*, *Joint Ops* – each game has a memorable parachute jumping scene. However, *Crysis* will be different due to the very extreme (in all senses of the word) real-time plummet to earth. Modelled on the physics of gravity, wind and atmospheric pressure, you'll have to guide your character from the moment he leaves the aircraft, through the volumetric clouds, until he lands on the island archipelago. Your landing position will depend on your jump – so you might have to swim to shore if you splashdown in the sea, or be ready for an instant firefight if you accidentally land in the middle of a North Korean army base.



CHIN up lads, not the end of the world.



NORMAN Foster unveils his latest design.



"YOU can't park that here mate."

Forget nuclear weapons – freezing people and then shooting off their arms and legs is truly the way forward

paradise!" These icy surroundings are set to allow for some interesting features, in particular a weapon we haven't seen since *Painkiller* – the common or garden freeze-ray.

"Basically, you can freeze an alien unit," Yerli elaborates with glee, "and shatter it afterwards. Also, the shattering is all real-time, which means that after you've used the weapon, depending on where you shoot them with another gun, the ice will break and shatter realistically with correct physics for all the chunks of ice."

You'll have to excuse us for unashamedly promoting our enthusiasm, but the freeze-ray is possibly the best weapon ever known to mankind. Forget nuclear weapons and chemical rockets – freezing people and then shooting off their arms and legs is truly the way forward.

The globe means, of course, that the wonderment of *CryEngine 2* will not be

limited to simple jungles, beaches and mud huts. In the words of *Stingray*, "anything can happen in the next half-hour", with levels also promised aboard an aircraft carrier and in a yet-to-be-revealed top secret location.

PRETTY AND CLEVER

CryEngine 2 isn't just a pretty face – even if it does churn out stunning visuals like a butter churn churns out, erm, butter. It's also running an extremely powerful physics engine capable of handling the complex calculations required to demolish the huts and structures about the game. We're not just talking shooting planks of wood or pushing a barrel down a slope either – we're talking about explosions levelling trees, about ploughing through houses in trucks, tank and jeeps, and watching walls collapse and the debris fall and scatter (see 'The Joys Of Destruction', p27).



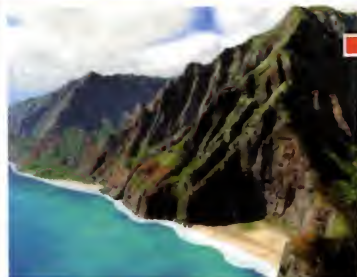
A man needs a shed...



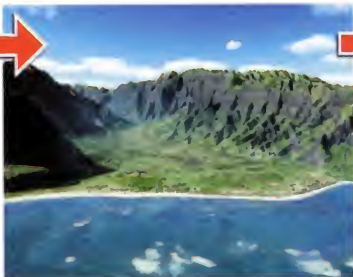
...ESPECIALLY at night

A Day In The Life

Crytek's technology allows the effortless passage of the sun across the sky in real-time



9AM: Another beautiful day dawns on paradise. As the sun glints off the sea, you can faintly hear rapid machine gun fire mixed with the anguished screams of North Korean soldiers in their death throes.



12PM: Shadows are cast in real-time across a landscape that's rapidly heating up. Even though the technology has real-time day/night, missions will just see the sun move a little to create different moods.



6PM: As the sun moves towards the horizon the true HDR (high dynamic range) lighting causes the sunlight to stream across the *Crysis* world in gorgeous realistic shafts. Bit of a Kodak moment this.



8PM: Night is approaching and the last rays of the sun cast shadows behind the mountains and reflections on the deep blue ocean. Shame it's probably all going to be destroyed by a mysterious alien race, eh?

Then there are the small details, such as the way leaves and foliage bend realistically as you brush past, how the soft shadowing filters down from the treetops and even how the real-time lighting engine makes day pass realistically into night. The billowing volumetric clouds, the wavering shadows of individual leaves on individual trees, the blinding sunlight. If there was ever a shout out for you to upgrade, then it's this, although Crytek promises the game will run on this-gen machines.

Plus of course, where there are spacecraft and sparkling blue energy spheres, there are aliens. Crytek is particularly proud of its human AI routines

in *Far Cry*, loving the way you were forced to outwit the enemy rather than simply out-shoot them.

It wasn't, however, as happy with the Trigen, which simply required you to out-react them and put a bullet in their face before they could leap at you. The Trigen, however, would hardly be capable of piloting a colossal spacecraft millions of light years, so fighting against these now invading forces is promised to be just as involving and intense as the human combat we've come to know and love.

"The new enemies will always have tactical information," Yerli informs us. "When you look carefully and watch them,

you'll work out exactly what you have to do to gain an advantage. What we want is for the player to work out how to outsmart the aliens, because when you outsmart an enemy, you always feel more gratified." So expect aliens moving in packs, or in certain patterns – or maybe even hunting you down for the interloper you are.

ALIEN CONCEPT

Whether you're cowering behind trees from angry North Koreans or aliens, however, *Far Cry*'s open-endedness and 'action bubble' mentality remains. When you're approaching a jungle

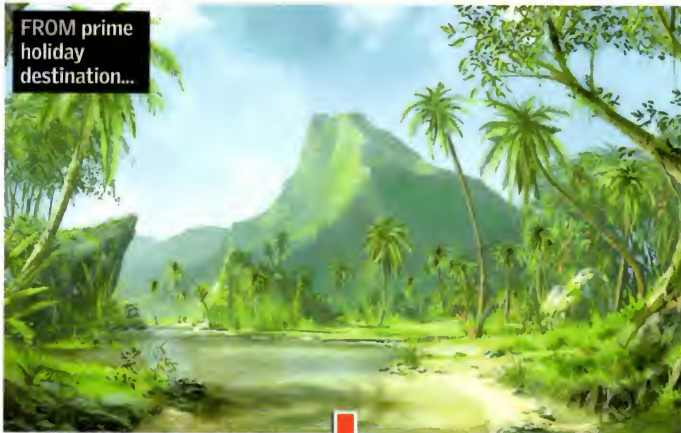
"GOT to be a cigarette lighter on this thing somewhere."



Snow Globe

You'll need to wrap up warm inside the alien sphere

FROM prime holiday destination...



...TO highly damaged ecosystem.



As Cevat Yerli, CEO of Crytek, underlines, the codename for *Crysis* was 'Frozen Paradise' – which isn't surprising when you see the concept art for the game. The aliens land and generate a sphere that instantly shock-freezes everything inside it. Why? Well, it's up to you and your US Army special unit to discover their sinister master-plan, but the arctic conditions will affect how you take on the invaders. Luckily, you have a state-of-the-art modded suit to play with, plus the ability to freeze and shatter enemies – although your foes also possess the same technology. *Crysis* will also have other weather conditions including a storm and high winds that the developer promises will provide additional hazards for players.

outpost stealthily, searching for a sniper point, flanking or simply driving a truck straight through an enemy outhouse, the freedom given to the AI around you will be nothing short of remarkable.

"You can use stealth or distract them," Yerli elaborates, still ecstatic at the prospect of truly sentient aliens. "It's something that I feel is truly new for the genre, as aliens are usually reactive – they just move towards you and you kill them."

On more than one occasion you'll have allies to help you out as well, and while you won't be directly ordering them about the shop, they'll watch your movements and act accordingly. "It's very cool," explains Yerli. "If you play stealthily, they actually mimic your style of gameplay and become stealthy too." However, *Crysis* also makes the consequences larger, with story threats based solely around the characters in your unit. "The message we want to give is that characters matter," adds Yerli. "So, if you do protect a certain person and they survive a mission, you'll get a choice of characters in later levels."

SUIT UP

One of the major new features of *Crysis*, however, is the ability to modify your character's suit and weapons, distributing

energy between different sub-systems, much in the way that old *X-Wing*/*TIE Fighter* games once worked. "By default you get an energy level of 100," Yerli tells us, "and you can divert that to different sub-systems – strength, speed and armour. So if you increase speed, for example, the other two systems will decrease. There are upgrades for more energy and there's also a temperature control. Plus, there's even a sound dampener for stealth."

And what about the weapons? "We have the usual array of weapons such as the shotgun and sniper rifle," answers Yerli, with the ghost of *Far Cry* past twinkling in his eye. "But then each of the weapon classes has modules for upgrades so you can, say, attach a sniper scope to a shotgun – which I wouldn't recommend! But basically, it's up to you what you do with your weaponry."

GO GO GADGET

Upgrading your abilities and weaponry won't be a complex manoeuvre either, with a streamlined interface allowing all sorts of customisation at the click of a button. Your suit's upgrades take some cues from the RPG genre in that your character's skills will improve as the game goes on. "The suit looks unique and it adds a completely new functionality to the shooter," states Yerli,

somewhat excitedly. "Because it's real-time, you can change it any time you want. During combat you can just go behind a tree, top up your armour, then go back into battle. Then when you're done, you can increase your speed and run like hell to take cover again. Plus we will have hotkeys or presets for play modes – and that's something I think is totally new to the FPS genre. It's actually a very simple idea, but very powerful – it will make a real difference to how *Crysis* is played."

Vehicles, which include hovercrafts, jeeps, APCs and flyable helicopters this





I'M looking directly at it... Nothing's happened.



Crytek impressed us all in 2004 with *Far Cry*, and we've no reason to doubt it can't do it all over again

The Joys Of Destruction

Crysis's interactive environment is explosive fun



THE sort of hut The A-Team would love.

Far Cry was one of the first PC games with ground-breaking physics technology – ragdoll bodies would float in water, barrels could be rolled downhill and vehicles would realistically hug the terrain. The new CryEngine allows all this and more, including the ability for characters to brush past leaves and fauna, and the realistic formation of ice. However, the most dramatic addition is the ability to completely destroy trees and, more dramatically, certain buildings. "The idea is that whatever looks breakable and interactive in the *Crysis* environment will be," says Crytek CEO Cevat Yerli. In practice, it means a shoddily-built shack can be blown up or a heavy vehicle, such as an APC or tank, can drive straight through it, with the building toppling and breaking apart, burying any unfortunates beneath chunks of rubble, wood and corrugated iron. Excited yet?

time around, will be far more integral to the multiplayer as well. Crytek is paying much more attention to deathmatch this time than it did with *Far Cry*, with the suit playing a major role in maps that'll cater for 32 players with ease.

So there you have it. Crytek really came out of the blue with *Far Cry* in 2004, shocking and impressing all and sundry with a fantastic game from an entirely unknown developer – and we've no reason to doubt that it can't do it again. *Crysis* has a fantastic next-gen engine, a huge environment, amazing AI and an innovative upgradeable suit and weapon system – this from a collaboration of talented people from 20 different nations with no less than five awards since releasing their debut title. Like they say, in every crisis there's an opportunity – and that's probably the case even when it's spelt with a 'y'. **PCZ**



WE'VE come a long way since *Wolf 3D*...



HELLO. Anyone home?



COMING SOON...

"GOT me lookin' so crazy right now..."

RF ONLINE

Paul Presley once felt a rising force online – and then the porn filters kicked in...

DEVELOPER CCR Inc PUBLISHER Codemasters WEBSITE www.rf-onlinegame.com PREVIOUSLY IN... Issue 160

THE LOWDOWN

Mix of fantasy and technology	✓
Three distinct races	✓
Battle mechs	✓
Large-scale PvP combat	✓
One of the races sounds like fellatio	✓
Impression of being hardcore	✗

ETA
Spring
'06

THE ASIAN GAMING territories are home to many MMOs, but most never reach the West because the nature of the game is so tailored for a specific audience, they'd just never work outside of Korean gaming cafés.

Occasionally though, such as with *RF Online*, a game is deemed deep enough to head West. So it is then that Codemasters is set to bring the war-torn planet of Novus, complete with its three-way war, to these shores very soon.

The premise is that three factions are fighting for control of a powerful mining centre, the occupier of which gets to carve the finest weapons and armour for use in its fight for survival.

Probably the most balanced of the three races you can fight as, certainly in terms of ease of play, is the Cora Holy Alliance. Sexy elves mostly, with a casual attitude towards clothing and a penchant

for waving glowing rods of magic about, they may not have much raw force on the battlefields, but give them a chance to power-up a spell and you're in for all manner of animated spiritual attacks.

The Accretians, meanwhile, have the upper hand in terms of ruthless weaponry. If you're the sort of gamer who likes to smash things good, this homicidal race of alien robots will be right up your street. Then there's the Bellato, who may look like midget traders that wouldn't say boo to a ghost, but once they reach level 30 they can strap themselves into all manner of customisable battle mechs.

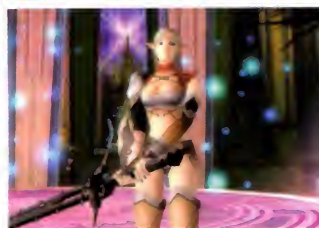
STAT ATTACK

That level 30 access point applies to all races. There's nothing in the way of classes for each race at first, but life begins at 30 in *RF Online*, as that's the point when the battlebots get their giant siege weapons, the dwarves get their

mechs and the elfish nearly-nudes get to mess with summoning powerful pet creatures to aid them on the battlefield.

The demonstration we saw was packed with numbers, stat manipulation and windows, none of which was helped by still being in Korean (that, obviously, will change before launch). The impression is an MMO that takes the visual loveliness of most Asian-market RPGs, mixes it with *PlanetSide*-scale combat and then hardcores things to the max – which is no bad thing. Plus, we suspect that what looks complex from the outside is far less so once you get the hang of things.

Mostly, *RF Online* just looks like being a lot of manic fun. Sure, there's an Asian flavour, but Codemasters has been granted access to modify each European server to meet local gameplay needs. Will we Westerners take to it? Well, you can't go wrong with battle mechs. Or indeed, nearly naked magic elves. **PCZ**



WHY YOU SHOULD BE EXCITED...



THE CORA HOLY ALLIANCE

A spiritual, religious civilisation that draws on magical arts, the holy blessings of the great god Disem and Ann Summers lingerie and bondage gear to smite their ungodly foes.



THE ACCRETIAN EMPIRE

Killer robots from the future. That is to say, a highly militaristic mechanoid race with guns the size of cruise liners and a willingness to use them on men, women, rabbits and anything else with a pulse.



THE BELLATO UNION

Cutesy-wootsy pixie fellas that like to skip around singing songs and gathering berries. Until they strap themselves into giant battle mech machines and blow the living shit out of everything.



FROM the East side to the West: *RF Online* is coming to these shores very soon.



The Cora Holy Alliance are sexy elves with a casual attitude to clothing and a penchant for waving glowing rods of magic



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UPFRONT **OI!WHAT'SYOURGAME?**



HINES!

WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

Steve Hogarty pries open the jaws of *Oblivion* and takes a peek inside. Oh look, it's *Pete Hines*...

Who are ya?



NAME Pete Hines

DEVELOPER Bethesda

POSITION VP of Public Relations
& Marketing

AGE 36

CURRENTLY WORKING ON *The Elder
Scrolls IV: Oblivion, Fallout 3*

FAVOURITE GAME *X-Com*

Q *Morrowind* was epic – where do you plan to go from there with *Oblivion*?

A There were definitely some things in *Morrowind* we liked and definitely some things we thought we could do better. For *Oblivion*, there were some things we wanted to try that haven't been done before – like photo-realistic forests – so that was one thing we wanted to accomplish visually. We have a big world to explore, so we want to push the graphics, then do things with the AI and implement a better combat system. The big goal for us is always 'go where you want, do what you want'.

The province in which *Oblivion* is set is massive too. Was it daunting populating it with so many people and so much lore?

We look at it from several vantage points, and obviously, where it's set is going to play a big part in what goes in the world. We start with the big picture before we start asking about details, such as what's happening in the Thieves' Guild, what's going on with the Dark Brotherhood and what's the overriding story for them in the context of the world. Each of these interrelate to one other, and we have to look at how the main quest affects all of these people.

So how smart is the AI? Will they envy your sentence, or at least, pretend to be envious?

We try not to go too overboard, and we've had to scale things back simply because we don't want things going on that the player doesn't understand. For instance, we don't let AI characters steal items from you – it sounds like something that would be cool and fun, having to lock your house and stuff, but the problem is that when you come back to your house and there are items missing, it doesn't feel like somebody's stolen them, more like the game's broken. We try to make sure that happenings in the game are understandable and are something that you can see and control.

You definitely seem to have a penchant for expansive environments – how big is *Oblivion*'s Cyrodiil then?

If you place the *Morrowind* world into the *Oblivion* engine, you could literally see from one end of the island to the other. It feels like an amusement park because the scale doesn't fit and you can see so far. A lot of managing the size is just adjusting how far apart

we spread stuff out, so that things like riding on horseback don't have you going from one side of the map to another in two minutes.

And seeing as this one isn't set on an island...

We actually built a lot more of the world in the game space, so that when you get to the border of the game, you can still see off into the distance. We generated that terrain because even if you don't get to visit it, we don't want you to hit an invisible wall.

***Oblivion*'s cities are far removed from the scattered villages of *Morrowind*. How did their design come about?**


It terms of art direction, a lot of it comes from our lead artist Matt Carofano – he drew the layouts of all these cities. We tell the artist what we want them to look like in general, and they come back to us with specific building designs. The imperial city for example: it's all white stone and you feel like you could be in Athens, then you visit a city in the north and it feels like you're in the woods, with log cabins.

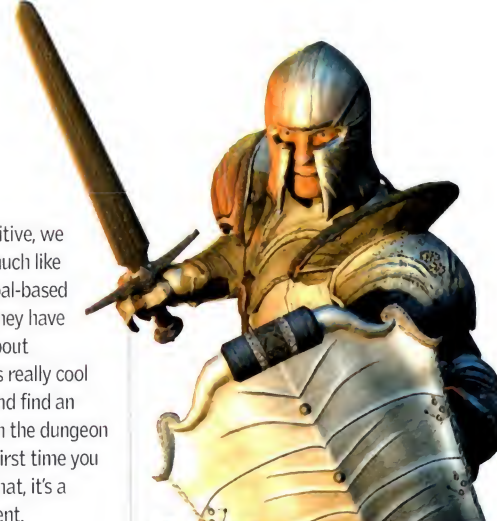
Was it always planned to have such complex AI?

Yes. Complex AI was one of our goals, and because scripting all of the NPCs

we have would be prohibitive, we had to design a system much like *The Sims* where it's all goal-based – the AI has a goal and they have to work out how to go about achieving those goals. It's really cool to walk into a dungeon and find an adventurer going through the dungeon gathering stuff too. The first time you come across things like that, it's a smile-on-your-face moment.

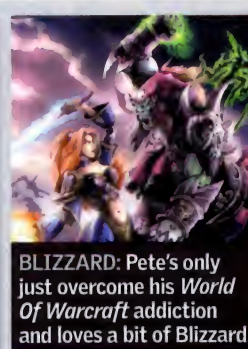
And finally – how's *Fallout 3* coming along?

We've got a lot of folks working on that game now, and what I've seen of it so far is looking really good and has me very excited – I'm a big fan. We're approaching *Fallout 3* as if we developed the first and second games – we're developing it just like we developed *Oblivion*. *Fallout 3* is our baby, we want to stay true to what it is and we want to deliver something that all the fans think is worthwhile. We're trying to move the series forward, keeping it fresh and cool while staying true to its roots. When we're ready we'll let people know, and hopefully people will be excited about some of the ideas we have and some of the stuff we're up to. 



PETE HINES

Where he turns for inspiration...





STOP! TEN HAMMERS TIME...

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR: TEN HAMMERS

Steve Hogarty keeps banging his thumb

DEVELOPER Pandemic PUBLISHER THQ

WEBSITE www.fullspectrumwarrior.com/fsw2 PREVIOUSLY IN... 163

THE LOWDOWN

You can control your soldiers directly if only for a fleeting moment ✓

Stairways, elevations, rooftops and vantage points ✓

Vehicles! Tanks! Even bigger explosions! ✓

The kind developer has finally added a competitive multiplayer mode ✓

Not really that different from *Full Spectrum Warrior* ✗



ORIGINALLY WE PLANNED to write this hands-on while sipping away at the premium-strength cider Three Hammers that Will found in his local CostCutters last month, hopefully producing four-pages of dangerously honest beliefs about supposed weapons of mass destruction, openly derisory comments about George Bush and an anecdote about Saddam, a leper and a sausage which we believed to be funny at the time.

Eventually, we planned, it would descend into a paragraph-straddling drunken slur against misplaced morals, asinine politics and dubious ethics, bereft of spelling and grammar and punctuated by random mentions of the game I'm supposed to be playing, no doubt inserted

by a frustrated editor while I nurse a hangover that could level a hippo.

CHEERS, THEN

Maybe it was fortunate then that as I raised the apple-scented paint-stripper to my lips I was immediately stabbed by about 12 icy glares from various official types around the office. Apparently it's frowned upon to get supremely hammered in the workplace, and so I have to write about *Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers* while sober. Honestly, the things I have to put up with.

You no doubt remember *Full Spectrum Warrior* as the squad-based strategic shooter that, while making a pretty decent impact on PC, was always an Xbox classic first and foremost. Set in modern-day combat scenarios (a made-up Middle-

ETA
Mar
'06



Stormtrooping
Star Wars Battlefront, a Star Wars flavoured competent imitation of Battlefield 1942.

Full Specky
Pandemic gives us Full Spectrum Warrior. No hammer-themed subtitle, but great.

Invasion
B-movie spoof-a-roonie Destroy All Humans! comes to consoles. It's got Invader Zim in it.

Man for hire
Free-roaming explode 'em up Mercenaries hits PS2 and Xbox. No PC version, though.



2004

2004

2005

2005

The original was used to train US soldiers, but *Ten Hammers* aims to add more Hollywood flair to the mix



SGT Randolph's Humvee dealership was a mild success.

Making Tracks

Tanks... as wonderful as kittens and cornfields in late summer



PARKING round here is a nightmare.

Eastern town in a made-up Middle-Eastern country), the original game placed you in command of a squad of four troops who must liberate the residents of the fictitious dictatorship in a hail of gunfire and patriotic shouting. The twist was that you don't directly control any of your men, instead you give orders, set firing sectors, apply suppressing fire, covering fire, chuck grenades about and generally get the job done. Later levels, meanwhile, saw you controlling more than one squad, allowing you to employ complex flanking manoeuvres to outwit and outgun the enemy. That was the gist of *FSW* – manoeuvre, flank, neutralise and move on.

MAKE IT SO

Ten Hammers is shaping up to be everything *Full Spectrum Warrior* was, except this time around Pandemic has the freedom to tweak the gameplay towards something a bit more action-orientated. Whereas the original touted a utilitarian, urban warfare-simulating engine actually used to train US soldiers, *Ten Hammers* is aiming to add more Hollywood flair to the mix, along with a few manoeuvres that are a little more gung-ho than the marine's last outing. You've still got all the basics – a couple of squads of four soldiers



THIS guy was bullied as a child.

deny cover to nearby targets on the atlantic. Please.

each with a speciality (riflemannery, grenadery, machine gunnery and team leadery), multiple squads covering one another and manoeuvring into flanking positions, using suppressing fire – all the nitty-gritty real-life strategies supposedly employed by nitty-gritty real-life soldiers. But gone, for example, is the realistic yet potentially confusing 3D fog of war which cloaked the original in fuzzy grey areas, replaced by 360-degrees of pure,

unadulterated perception. Tweaks and changes like this are what constitute *Ten Hammers*' step away from the simulation genre and towards the probably more lucrative action-shooter genre. Still intact are the gory slow-mo deaths and stalemate standoffs with the locals, the conveniently placed piles of rubble and sandbags – but now there are more rooftops and vantage points. Oh, and you get to drive tanks this time.

One of the main additions in *Ten Hammers*, and easily one of the most interesting, is the ability to control vehicles, tanks in particular. Big tanks with guns and cannons. Strategy goes out the window as soon as you take control of these – you'll find yourself instead trundling around the streets killing everything you see and avoiding the occasional RPG-touting terrorist. The fun ends when the friendly AI snatches the tank from your control and drives it off somewhere else (as though the game decides you're finished playing with it). Besides being the most powerful weapon in the game, the tank is actually useful for laying down the best suppressing fire you can get and allowing your squads to move about with relative freedom. Not only can you command tanks, you also get to control those nifty little Humvees with the machine guns on top.

SKY-TANKS. Hoorah!





The excellent set-pieces of the original are here, forcing you to think laterally in what are puzzle-like scenarios

Yes, we love tanks, but it was a problem we had with the original: tanks sometimes made cameo appearances but you could never actually tell them what to do. This time around however, they're yours to command in much the same way you command your squads. Controlling a squad consists of right-clicking to bring up a positioning reticule which snaps to corners and walls, and then clicking when you're satisfied with the reticule's position before watching your merry squad sprint towards their intended destination. Left-clicks bring up what experts call a 'firing sector' (or what we call 'the shoot in this general direction-o-meter'), which makes your squad train their sights on a certain area, applying covering fire and liberating the enemy when necessary. Controlling a tank is much the same, with right-clicks moving you about the sandy streets with unerring grace, and left-clicks deciding which bits of the Middle East you want to destroy at any given time.

It's clear to see that the intuition involved in moving troops around has been

left unscathed. In fact, it's been improved – almost every command can be further specified with various radial menus; you can split your squad into two teams of two men, move with caution, drag injured soldiers to safety and access grenades with ease. In addition, you can now take direct control of a single soldier for a brief moment, either to take a pot-shot with your rifleman or launch a liberating grenade or two with your grenadier. It's a feature that works well, enabling you to precisely pick off or blow up certain targets. The same can be said of the vehicles, with the tank's lethal cannon being directly controllable and turning those wacky insurgents into assorted flying limbs and a fine red mist.

I CAN DO SUMS, ME

The AI has been improved, meaning instead of scripted enemy positions and strategies, you'll often be faced with randomly generated enemies who, while not being smart enough to outflank you (they are untrained madmen after all), can do a

pretty good job of staying under cover. It's fair to say that there were a few occasions in which my American hunters and insurgent hunted started playing silly-buggers. For instance, like the time when I successfully flanked a lone terrorist, snuck to within a few feet of his encampment and ordered my troops to "Kill, kill, kill!", before watching them blast holes in the wall behind the evil-doer, who then proceeded to accurately put four holes in the four heads of my four highly-trained soldiers with ease. These are, though, in all probability, the hallmarks of early code rather than anything else.

If you got sweaty-palmed last time around, meanwhile, you've got even more heart palpitations to come – what with the new enemy tactics giving *Ten Hammers* a faster pace than the first game. Conflicts come thick and fast, usually lasting a few moments, especially when backtracking through places you thought were clear, only to encounter yet more resistance. The excellently engineered set-pieces of the original are here too, forcing you to think laterally in what are almost puzzle-like scenarios (with your squads forced to traverse particularly dangerous streets or flank awkwardly placed enemies). Situations like these usually have more than one solution, requiring some intelligent strategic thought rather than all-out liberation.

DUNES OF HAZARD

Of course, with the addition of a competitive multiplayer mode, *Ten Hammers* is set to please *Full Spectrum Warrior* fans looking to shoot one another rather than co-operate. With more action, more detail and more beautifully choreographed teamwork, this will no doubt end up being an intense urban warfare experience waiting to be enjoyed by anybody who's seen some grainy CNN footage of some sand dunes and thought it looked mildly interesting.

It's fair to say that the early code I was fiddling with was like trying to play Tic Tac Toe from 50ft away with a pen tied to a



Flanking Flankers

'Flank' sounds like 'wank'. You see how easy this job is?



OVER there, behind those crates... It's a terrorist. If we don't kill him soon he'll terrorise things. Move quickly now, or he'll hear us...



WITH Alpha team confusing the terrorist with a puppet show, Bravo team can sneak around this way where he can't see us...



OH bugger, I think this terrorist has us figured out. He's a wily one alright. If you look closely you'll see he's wearing a monocle and a top hat.



YOU may be smart, terrorist, but let's see how smart you are when you're dead and keeled over in an awkward and uncompromising position.

really long stick – with the control configuration menu as yet un-implemented and the tutorial having button icons either missing or from an Xbox controller, I was flying blind. Sure, the interface will be cleaned up and the misplaced icons removed soon enough, but to me it's a sign of *Ten Hammers'* underlying leaning towards an Xbox release. But these are the times we live in.

Whether or not the tweaks, changes and additions are enough to shake the squad-based shooter tree isn't clear yet, especially as the departure from the original game isn't exactly immense. One thing's for certain though – once the game's released there'll be a cardboard cut-out of a soldier in every game shop, maybe doubling as a shelf for the game, with copies of *Ten Hammers* embedded in his stomach like shrapnel. It'll be popular too, no doubt thanks to the same TV advert appearing every two minutes. It may even cause army enrolment figures to rise slightly, but will it achieve the greatness required to merit the advertising budget? We'll find out in March. **PCZ**



THE PROFESSIONALS

Uncovering the lies and slander perpetuated by PC gaming

PEDANTRY IN PC gaming? Who would have thought it? You see, when certain gamers rate a game, they're not just thinking about how fun it is; they're assessing the interior design, inspecting the ventilation systems, checking out the sewers and thinking stuff like: "Well, I handle toxic waste on a

professional basis and I certainly wouldn't leave it in a leaky barrel like that." And so we're now crying out to the butchers, bakers and candlestick-makers of Britain – how do you rate the meat, bread and candlesticks of PC gaming? These things truly MATTER in PC gaming. Amen.



HALO GRUNT

"As we found out when we were visualising aliens for The Science of Aliens project, even scientists can't agree on how much they might look like us. Features like eyes, limbs and flight have evolved independently so many

times on Earth, that they're likely in aliens too. However, two arms, two legs, two eyes above a nose and a mouth are extremely unlikely – they're just quirks of evolution here on Earth. Also, the Covenant's religious social structure seems very much based on our fears of very Earth-based religious examples. However, it's possible that some kind of spirituality is an inevitable product of higher intelligence."

PCZONE



Handy number of limbs

QUAKE STROGG SOLDIER

"These guys look pretty human to me. They probably say more about the future of the human race than they do about the possibilities for alien life. We have already begun to cyborgise ourselves with contact lenses and artificial joints – and an artificial heart is just round the corner. Some scientists argue that we'll increasingly hybridise ourselves with technology, until eventually us humans and our technology are synonymous and symbiotic – neither has meaning without the other. So, again – these guys aren't all that far away from us."

PCZONE



You in ten years time



HALF-LIFE 2 VORTIGAUNT

"While still bipedal, I like the less-than-human array of sense organs on this alien's head. The fact that they seem to breathe oxygen is interesting. Oxygen is effective at releasing energy in our bodies, so could have evolved in aliens too, but like some bacteria on Earth, aliens could find other ways to liberate energy. Their seemingly hive organisation found at the close of *Half-Life* and the presumably asexual breeding (there are no females) are based on an Earth example, but are found so generally here they could occur on an alien planet."

PCZONE



Great messed-up face



DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR GREY ALIEN

"When we were researching The Science of Aliens exhibition we found out that these pasty little fellas are more likely to be products of our own subconscious than anything to do with alien life. We are hard-wired from birth to see faces in things and this, combined with dream experiences, is likely to have produced reports of other-worldly beings. The big, hypnotic eyes, weird disembodied sensations and odd sexual shenanigans associated with grey aliens are also features of Victorian fairy abductions and medieval succubus encounters."

PCZONE



Truth isn't anywhere



SPACE INVADERS SPACE INVADER

"In a weird way, these aliens might be the most accurate of all the creatures here in that they look very little like anything here on Earth (although pixelated graphics helps a lot). Their classic role in computer games is to be mown down in large numbers before Earth finally succumbs to the invasion. We often use aliens in such unsympathetic ways to express mindless violence. Annihilating humans on a massive scale is objectionable, but it seems that when you substitute in pixelated aliens, then it's perfectly OK."

PCZONE



Perhaps excellent

WINNER: Space Invaders Defying the progress of videogaming graphics, the essential weird looks of those cheeky Space Invaders win the day. 'Bleep, bleep' indeed, chaps. Well done!



PCZONE READER OFFER!

Visit The Science Of Aliens Exhibition, and get a mate in free!

Yes that's right, bring along a freshly-minted copy of *PC ZONE* to the Science Museum and wave this page at the nice man/lady behind the counter and whoever you're with will get in to The Science Of Aliens exhibition for free! Adult tickets cost £8.95, kids and concessions chalk up at £6.25. London's Science Museum (which has free entry for its main exhibits) can be found right near South Kensington tube station – open seven days a week. It's a fascinating exhibition and, as before, Will's girlfriend heartily endorses the cakes in the museum café. More details can be found at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/aliens/index.asp. You'd better get your skates on though, as everything wraps up on Feb 26.

**THIS MONTH:
ALIENS**

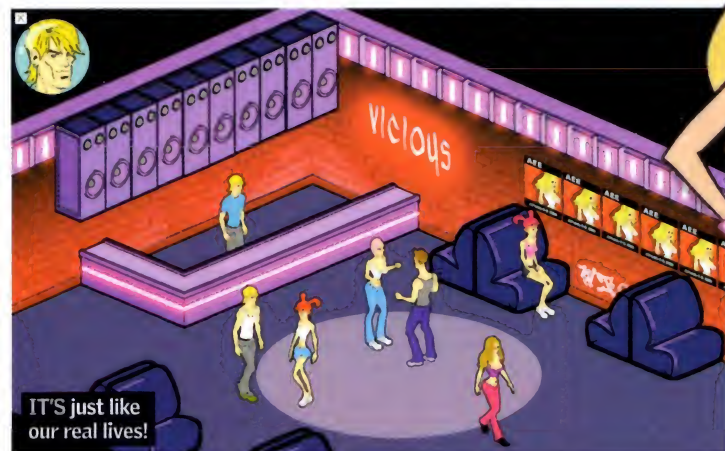
Expert: Stephen Foulger
Job: Curator of 'The Science of Aliens' exhibition
Company: The Science Museum
Specialised Pedantry: Unlikely extra-terrestrials



PERVERTS REUNITED

Watch cartoon people doing the bad thing. Online!

www.naughtyamericathegame.com | ETA: March



WE'RE ALMOST GETTING ashamed of our constant gutter-journalistic urges, but this sex MMOG is just so lame it had to be covered. A game that has cartoon avatars having intercourse, designed purely for those too fat and ugly to meet a real member of the opposite sex.

Inside *Naughty America*, you can guide your pert-breasted avatar through seedy night clubs searching for a special

someone, then if you're lucky you can escort them back to your place and make virtual love to them. With real life contact information a click away, the game brings cyber stalking to whole new levels of perversion. If you're feeling daring, you can send SMS text messages to the person you're humping, or even see your playmate live via webcam.



Banzai Bastard!!

Colourfully-named anime series **BASTARD!!** gets two exclamation marks and an MMO

www.bastard-online.jp | ETA: TBA

TWO WHOLE EXCLAMATION marks? Those crazy Japanese!! But what exactly is **BASTARD!! Online** (other than a thinly veiled excuse for a news piece that concentrates on it having a rude name). It's actually an MMO platformer based on a Japanese anime, in which (according to Suze) one of the characters is sexually molested by an evil ghost. In the name of journalistic veracity, we tried to watch the series – only to discover that the creator of *Bastard!!* was arrested (unsurprisingly some might say) halfway through production and it was never finished. If you understand Japanese, can you check the website and tell us what the hell's going on please? There's definitely a NeverQuest in the making here...



Maaaaaaaartin,

I think it's about time that non-interactive FMVs are wiped completely from modern games. OK, they were quite fancy when CD-ROMs were first invented, but I'm suggesting that we've moved on since 1994.

Jamie Sefton

Dear Jamie,

Moved on? Moved on?! After the demise of the FMV we were then subjected to a decade of shite in-engine cut-scenes, usually with the camera rotating around static characters whose mouths looked like a ventriloquist's dummy. Had it not been for several pitiful games like *Phantasmagoria* that raped and killed the FMV, it could have become the best storytelling device in PC gaming.

Martin Korda

Dear Martin,

The best storytelling device in games? Rubbish. An FMV is an extremely lazy way of telling a story – the cinematic equivalent of the dialogue boards that flash up in silent movies. Graphics have got to the stage now where in-game graphics are better than most cut-scenes from the '90s. Look at *Half-Life 2* – that seamlessly integrated amazing character, mood and storyline without a bloody FMV in sight. JS

Dear Jamie,

Well sure, it works in the likes of *Half-Life 2* where the engine is close to lifelike, but what about the 95 per cent of games where the engine simply isn't good enough to convey emotion? They still look shit and are totally bereft of tension and emotion. Not only that, a well-acted FMV can make a game feel much more like an interactive movie and in time, could well become the single most powerful element in blurring the boundaries between films and games. MK

Dear Martin,

Name one recent 'well-acted FMV', you daft twat. JS

Dear Jamie,

The reason I've not seen any well-acted FMVs recently is because the industry doesn't really use them anymore. That's the whole point of this argument. Hello? MK

Dear Martin,

God, it's like trying to explain quantum physics to a cat. Why do we want our games more like movies? Games are evolving – unlike you, Martin. JS



FLIGHT SIMULATORS

Steve Hill takes to the California skies. Makes you sick, doesn't it?



I'M FLYING A plane over Arnold Schwarzenegger's house. I'm not OK...

Rewind a couple of hours. We're driving south on Interstate 5. Destination: an airfield in San Diego, home of Barnstorming's Top Dog Air Combat experience, described thus: 'Real air combat in real aircraft! Just like you've seen in the movies. This is hands-on, heart-pounding, adrenaline-pumping dogfighting. No pilot's licence required – just guts!'

It's the latter element that's severely lacking (at this stage), as four pasty hacks bundle into a limo. With an air of

tension already apparent, one bright spark suggests we pick up a few beers to calm the nerves. The dogfighting instructions clearly state, 'We recommend that you do not consume alcoholic beverages on the eve of your flight', but they don't say anything about the morning. As such, we take a detour to a supermarket and liberate a crate of cheap Mexican lager.

FLY BOY

Rocking up at the airfield in a slightly more relaxed frame of mind, we're confronted with a mammoth spread of American-sized food. If you've ever been to the States, you'll know that a sandwich there is a very different proposition to the humble British butty. After all, why have one slice of beef when you can have 20?

"You really don't want to eat," suggests a returning dogfighter, but it's already too late. The advice is scoffed at while scoffing, the theory being that the food will soak up the beer.

The obligatory waiver is signed, with the risks involved including 'injury or death due to collision with other aircraft or obstacles on the



LOOK closely, and you might see Hill reaching for his Lunch Review Bag.



"THEY puke up diddly-up-up, they puke down diddly-down-down...."



ROGER roger...



WELCOME to the runway of doom...



WATCH the birdie.



PRETTY fly for a white guy.

high yoyos and low yoyos, during which we will experience G-Forces of 3-3.5 for a sustained period. The idea is to get behind your opponent – into the Weapons Deployment Zone – press the trigger and "make whatever your favourite machine gun sound is".

My opponent for the day is the venerable Steve Boxer, a fellow journalist who's been following me around the world for a decade. Both decked out in spanking new Ray-Bans, it's like a scene from *Top Gun*, albeit without the homoerotic undertones (he's not my type). Taking the advice of Dominik Diamond – who did the same event for TV – I opt for the younger co-pilot, on the basis that the other one is an ageing reformed drug user, and more likely to cark it in mid-air.

Clambering into the cockpit with faux-cockiness, I tell myself that it's just

heaving, I reach for the hilariously-named Lunch Review Bag while asking him to please not do that again.

My head and stomach are in pieces, and I've yet to even fly the thing myself. This is soon rectified when pilot-boy shouts "your plane!" and the stick in front of me lurches into life. Tentatively grabbing hold, it's extremely responsive, and I cautiously experiment. Stick goes left, plane goes left. Stick goes back, plane goes up, stomach goes down. Jesus Christ on a bike, I'm flying an aeroplane!

Meanwhile, the Boxer is circling for the kill, exploiting my G-Force trauma and extreme nausea to pick me off twice in quick succession. Sickbag in one hand and joystick in the other, I manage a

consolation kill, tersely uttering, "Take that you f****er!", much to the displeasure of my co-pilot, who sternly warns, "no profanities please". OK, just get this f****ing bird on the ground...

Back on terra firma, there's no *Top Gun* posturing or high-fives, and it's a sheepish pilot who takes a seat in the shade for a moment of quiet contemplation. Inevitably, stomach trumps brain, forcing a brisk scurry to the 'restroom.' There's no rest to be had, as I hug the wide-arse bowl, barking like a dog before birthing three violent retches of viscous purple fluid. Part beef, part lager, part oesophagus, it's like being turned inside out. They said guts were required, and mine are now strewn around their toilet. **PCZ**

It's genuinely horrific: in retrospect, three cans of cheap lager and a beef sandwich were possibly misjudged

ground or in the air; immersion in water or hypothermia; fire, flame or smoke; mental stress or stress-related illness'.

FORTY TWO

Perhaps predicting an imminent stress-related illness, one of the organisers pipes up with the well-rehearsed line that to date they have had no deaths, although 42 people have suffered car accidents on the way to the airfield. These are the kind of stats you want to hear, and it's something that I mentally repeat while making the long walk across the tarmac, having slumped through a gruelling half hour briefing, almost none of which made any sense. Even the man giving it described it as being about as much use as "striptease on the radio".

Essentially, it's a best-of-three dogfight, involving manoeuvres called

an aeroplane, and effectively no different to the Virgin 747 that flew us in the previous day. If anything, there's more legroom. For the spotters, we're flying a Varga VG-21, essentially a training plane from the 1970s. Strapped in, headphones on, we're underway, and it's a reasonably smooth takeoff, if extremely loud.

TASTE THE FLOOR

Heading out to the coast, it's a beautiful scene and I start to relax. I can't quite understand what the co-pilot in front is saying, but I agree anyway, at which point he yanks the stick back and to the left, turning my world upside down. It's genuinely horrific, and it's as much as I can do to scream as my eyes melt into my head, my brain implodes and my stomach turns somersaults. In retrospect, three cans of cheap Mexican lager and a beef sandwich was misjudged. Dry-

HOW REAL ARE... FLIGHT SIMULATORS

Tom Harnish, chief pilot of Barnstorming, has been flying for 40 years and racked up more than 10,000 hours. Also a dedicated flight sim fan, he claims: "The graphics of *Pacific Fighters* are awesome. In terms of the realistic flight modelling, it's got to be *X-Plane*. Microsoft has a lot of dimensions to it and so it's got the breadth, but I think *X-Plane* has got the depth."

As for how sims compare to the real thing, Harnish says: "The major difference is that on a sim you've got primarily visual input. When you're in a real aeroplane you've got so-called proprioceptive inputs, the G-forces, the sideways motion and to some extent the audio. With force feedback, the control feel is getting better, except that there's not a lot of aeroplanes that you fly with a stick that's six inches long."

PCZONE
2/5





UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

DEVELOPER Epic PUBLISHER Midway
WEBSITE www.ut2007.com ETA Late 2006

GREAT AS PREVIOUS incarnations of *UT* have been, there's never been a feeling of cohesion – a sense that the asteroid field or series of green mountains that you're killing people in are at all related. But now, as well as making us want to have its babies, (hyperbole, hyperbole, etc, etc), *UT2007* wants to tie everything together a lot more securely. You're fighting on one planet – in its urban rubble, its industrialised robot factories and in the skies around it – and each fighting zone is set to be visible from the others. So, in one level you may be looking down on these neon-strip streets and by-ways, and the next you'll be fighting in the guts of them. Soon please.



The Bigger Picture

1 NOW THAT'S A SCREENSHOT

Woo! Look at that! These here vehicles will be a key part of the new Conquest mode, which is touted as having the same automotive feel as Onslaught – only packaged with the objectives of Conquest.

2 FAKE COMPUTER GIRLIES

Well, the tank is lovely and everything, but we're more intrigued by the pink neon sign advertising 'Buck Love' with 'Girls' and 'Guns'. Quite a stage show really. Probably quite messy though.

3 JUST WAIT TILL YOU SEE IT MOVING

If there's ever been something that grabs you by the throat and screams at you until you upgrade your gaming rig, it's the thought of blowing this hovey-thing out of the sky. Class.

4 GARISH, NEON, VIOLENT

It's hard to tell what tone Epic is aiming for with its city environment – perhaps a pinch of *Blade Runner* here and a smidge of Gotham City there – but its neon lights are set to cast some beautifully dynamic and colourful lighting effects over the chaos.

5 THE FAMILIAR AND THE STRANGE

A full cast of technological monstrosities are expected to be returning in terms of weaponry. A redesigned link gun, the flak cannon, the shock rifle and (obviously) the rocket launcher are dead-certs.

6 FACES OF WAR

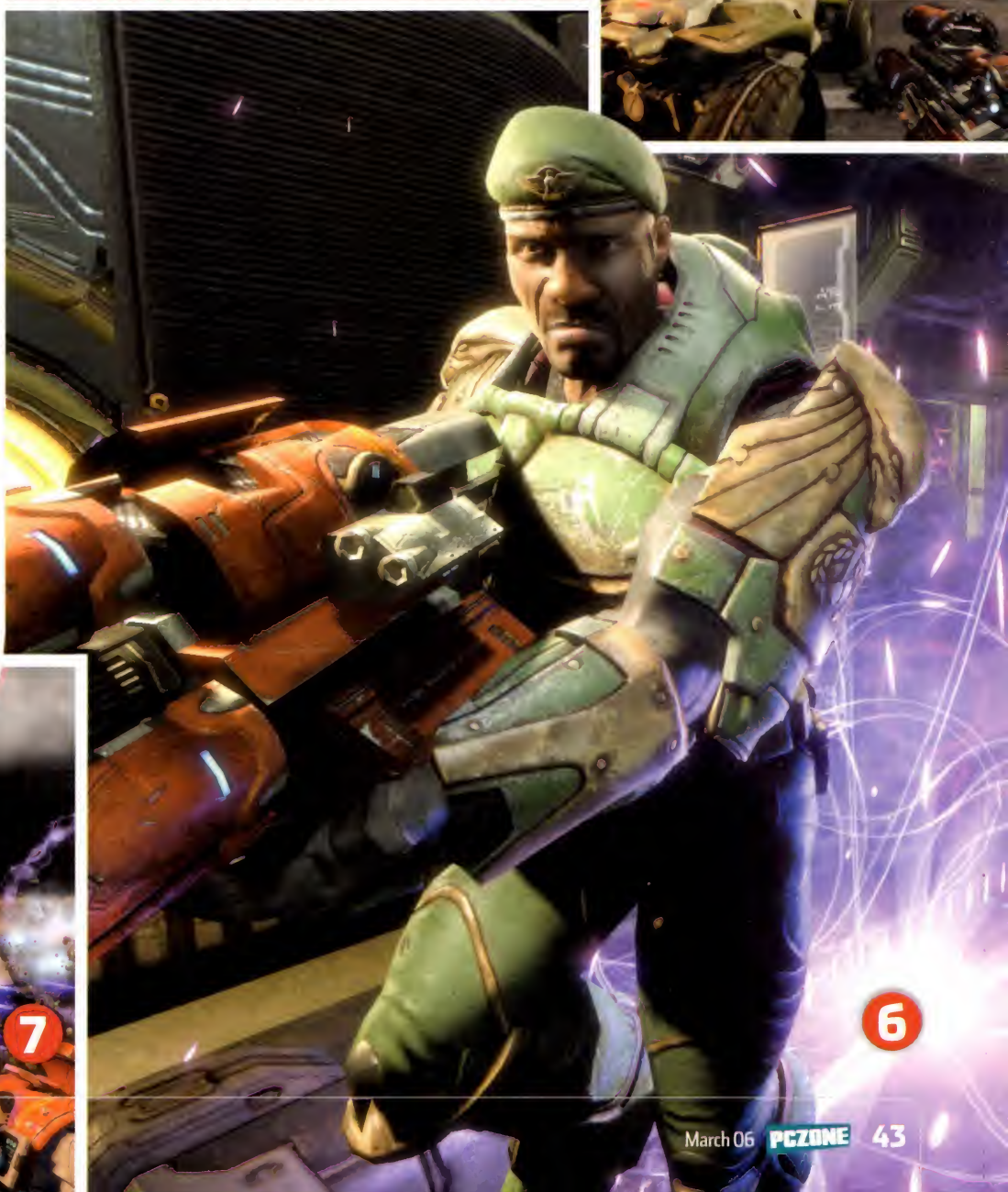
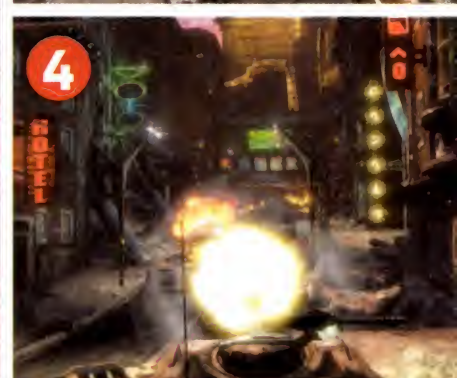
If Malcolm's face looks particularly grumpy here, then it's because Epic has splashed the cash on a technology called FaceFX, a nifty pouch of middle-ware that creates facial animation of the very gods.

7 HERE IN MY CAR

Look carefully here and you'll see Malcolm's little red mate getting run over among assorted physics mayhem. It's like a snapshot from one of those scary Christmas drink-drive adverts. Don't do it, kids.

8 PIVOTS, LEVERS AND THAT

Half the challenge is building up the strength to carry that gun. With such advanced physics routines, how do they do it? I mean, surely Malcolm should fall arse-over-tit when nudged?





IN THE SPOTLIGHT:



The Man Who Handles Lara Croft's Assets

MATT GORMAN – *TOMB RAIDER'S* GLOBAL BRAND MANAGER

Having been brand manager on both *Deus Ex* and *Time Splitters*, Matt Gorman did a pixel-perfect double jump off a wall and landed in the Lara Croft hot-seat. Governing all things Lara, and acting as relay between Crystal Dynamics and the Eidos marketing bods, he knows the sweaty aqua-marine T-shirt-wearer like no other...

Q So what's your job then, essentially?

A It entails making branding and marketing sense, and having my eye on the ball for the entire *Tomb Raider* franchise. This includes (but isn't limited to) videogames, co-marketing deals, promotional deals, licensing deals, branding and marketing for all the *Tomb Raider* games – starting off with *Legends*.

How did it feel to take on the responsibility of Ms Croft?

I was actually the US product manager on *Angel Of Darkness* for the final six months of work on the game – the project had gone on a long time and the previous manager had kind of lost steam, so I came in to do all of the marketing and PR. This meant that when I became brand manager, I already had experience with *Tomb Raider* during what was perhaps its most challenging episode to date. So understanding the essence of what the brand was and what Lara Croft was, what she meant to her many fans, her being an icon – all of that knowledge gave me a perfect perspective on what this next *Tomb Raider* game had to be in everyone's minds.

What did you make of the films?

As far as the essence of the character is concerned, they did a pretty damn good job, from the casting decision – having Angelina Jolie in the role – I couldn't imagine anyone else championing the role like she did. The movies might not have been awesome, but the characterisation sure was – Angelina did a really great job on that.

Are we likely to be seeing more Lara brands on things like Lucozade?

Product placement in games is now rather commonplace – there are some products that make sense for having a relationship with Lara and there are opportunities when the essence of each product matches. Having said that, I think what you'll find is that we're going to be very careful about making partnerships with other brands – I hope we're not going to see any more really plastic, really blatant promotional opportunities. The idea is that we don't want to whore her out – she's way too classy and way too sophisticated for us to do that. We're trying to develop the mental and psychological profile of Lara Croft to try and build her into a much more sophisticated three-dimensional entity –

and that doesn't work very well if you have her wearing giant labels and doing really plastic promotions like that.

In terms of Lara's image, how many times do you come across Lara being used in ways you wouldn't want to?

It's not too often – once every six months we come across something that's a bit borderline that we do contact people about. There's a very rabid following of Lara Croft – they really revere her quite a bit. There's just a few people out there who have a bit too much fun with her sometimes – it's some of these things that make us nervous that they might know where we live. For the most part – as far as legal or copyright infringement is concerned, it's usually handled very amicably and very openly. Lara is a very classy character and people haven't been too quick to make money off her negatively.



LIVING IN A MATERIAL WORLD

Not just a Madonna song either, nearly a whole George Harrison album to boot

eBay isn't just a place for middle-aged women who get featured on regional TV because they sell plastic hippos on the Internet from their own homes. Oh no, right now there are 98 issues of *PC ZONE* up there! And not being sold by us either! Can you believe it? People must really love us! There are only 52 copies of our rival publication up there as well, which means we must be best! There are also four special auctions, under the tag PCZoners, in which we're helping the sick and needy. So buy, buy, buy.

Buy our tat at www.ebay.co.uk
All proceeds go to charity, mate...
www.entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org



THIS MONTH'S TAT



EVERQUEST SPELL COLLECTION
We don't really know what this is.



ART OF EMPIRES
Beautiful artworks of *Empire* throughout the ages.



AGE OF MYTHOLOGY BOARDGAME
Can't admit that we've actually played it yet.



ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION CALENDAR
Everyday is a holiday in Tamriel.

THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	UFO: AFTERSHOCK BLUE T-SHIRT You'll be the envy of the whole turn-based gaming community, my friend. Again, sexy ladies WILL devour you.	£5.51	10
	CALL OF DUTY ZIPPO LIGHTER Either there are 22 bidders all called 'Paul Presly', or a lot of our readership smoke with style.	£40.00	22
	MAX PAYNE 2 CUFF LINKS Many people are clearly going to posh events, but want to have their gaming heart on their nerdy sleeve.	£42.54	14
	DIRTY GT LEGENDS CALENDAR We're glad to be rid of this to be honest. Pouting munters from Romford aren't really doing it for us this month.	£5.50	8



ASCALON ADVENTURES...

GUILD WARS: FACTIONS

Steve Hill dons the magic armour and pixie-boots for a glimpse at the second campaign...

DEVELOPER ArenaNet PUBLISHER NCSoft WEBSITE www.guildwars.com PREVIOUSLY IN... N/A

THE LOWDOWN

A whole new chapter to the *Guild Wars* story



Features two new character classes and 300 new skills



New player vs environment game type



Graphical upgrade will affect original game



Ultimately, it's just pressing keys



WHAT ON EARTH am I doing here? Writing a hands-on of an online role-playing game?

Regular readers of the hilarious/genius *NeverQuest* (p135) will be aware that it's not exactly my genre of choice, and thus my very presence on these pages is in direct contravention of the strictly laid-

down *PC ZONE* diktat. The truth is, Richie Shoemaker couldn't make it and Sefton begged me. Besides, if anyone knows about *Guild Wars* it's me, having trudged the badlands of Ascalon for months and met some interesting people, not least the female student who sent a photo of herself on a spacehopper wielding a whip.

BIG trouble in little Ascalon.



In fairness, of all the 'goblin games' I've been forced to plough through, *Guild Wars* is probably one of those that I hate the least. Bucking the trend of the genre, mercifully it doesn't require you to spend three months catching rats before you can venture outside your village. Equally crucial to its success is the business model. Once you've bought the game, it's free to play, so you don't feel obliged to justify your monthly subscription by spending every waking hour playing it, to the dereliction of the rest of your life. In many ways, it's the online role-playing game that you can play between meals without ruining your appetite.

DID YOU SAY FREE?

And while breaking the MMORPG mould with a free subscription may have represented something of a gamble, it's one that would appear to have paid off handsomely, with over a million players lured into its lustrous world. And that world is about to become even shinier with the advent of *Guild Wars: Factions*, internally referred to as 'Campaign 2'.

ETA
April
'06

THE STORY SO FAR... ARENANET



Snow Men
Set up by ex-Blizzard employees in Seattle, it was originally known as Triforce Inc.



Gone Soft
ArenaNet is snapped up by genre-specialist publisher NCSoft Corporation.



It's War!
Guild Wars is released, yielding more than 250,000 accounts in the first week.

Millionaires
Six months after the game's launch, the one million mark is comfortably surpassed.

2000

2002

2005

2005



THE Am Fah assassin:
Raiden without electricity.

with Campaign 3 expected to follow roughly six months down the line (ArenaNet has to get its money from somewhere).

And while *Factions* is a standalone title in so much as you don't require the original game to play it, there will only ever be one game client. As such, whatever version of *Guild Wars* you own, you'll be able to play the game, with various unique aspects available to owners of particular campaigns. So you could be playing the original game and see characters from *Factions*. Furthermore, the technological advances of the most recent campaign will have an impact on every version of the game.

As ArenaNet co-founder Jeff Strain explains: "Five years from now we could be at *Guild Wars* Campaign 10 and the graphics engine would be state-of-the-art, not a five-year-old engine."

Much as we relish the prospect of ten *Guild Wars* games, let's concentrate on Campaign 2 for now. Set on the continent of Cantha, to the south of Tyria, the scenery has a distinctly Asian theme, combining both Japanese and Chinese architecture. Beginning amid the rolling hills and monasteries of Shing Jea island, once you step out of the verdant sanctity of the tutorial area and head for the urban mainland it's a very different scenario, loosely described as Mexico City in an Asian setting.

NEW ENVIRONMENTS

A refreshing change from the traditional 'real ale' RPG setting, as Strain says: "In Campaign 1, we had all the standard fantasy settings. We had the ice area, the snow area, the desert, the rolling plains, the blasted area, the swampland. It was very centred on geographic archetypes. So what we wanted to do with Campaign 2, and what we will continue to do in future campaigns, is really explore not only areas that are defined by the geography in terms of

COMING soon:
When Trees Attack!

HACK, slash, conjure, tiger attack, hack, slash....



Ritualist Helping to heal the pain...

Something of a dark priest, your common-or-garden ritualist is a mix between a ranger, a necromancer and a monk. Boasting rare supernatural skill, the ritualist has a distinctive role, namely the ability to summon up a host of screaming spirits that can blind and attack enemies, heal allies and generally help to keep the party alive. With an array of primary attributes, these increase the durability of the ritualist's spirits and other creatures such as ranger pets. Attribute skills include direct damage spell line, immobilising creatures and healing. She enjoys working with animals and her favourite colour is black.

ONE of the many new tournament areas.



where they are in the world, but those that are defined by the cultural elements or story elements that really make them interesting. In the top six fantasy locations you wouldn't find an urban location where most of the events and stories take place on the rooftops of these ultra-dense buildings."

A long way removed from the traditional goblin-bashing locales, there's a danger of irking the fantasy purists. However, Strain claims: "It's just a way to



WILLIE Scott
out of Temple
Of Doom.

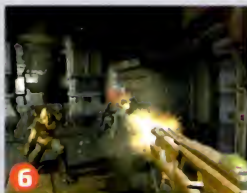
PCZONE CHARTS

- 1 — **FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006**
Issue 162 90%
- 2 ↑ **THE SIMS 2**
Issue 147 82%
- 3 — **AGE OF EMPIRES III**
Issue 162 84%
- 4 ↑ **THE MOVIES**
Issue 162 95%
- 5 ↓ **CALL OF DUTY 2**
Issue 162 91%
- 6 ↑ **QUAKE 4**
Issue 162 84%
- 7 — **THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE**
Issue 161 58%
- 8 ↓ **CIVILIZATION IV**
Issue 162 92%
- 9 ↑ **BLACK & WHITE 2**
Issue 161 93%
- 10 ↑ **BATTLEFIELD 2**
Issue 157 94%
- 11 ↑ **THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY**
Issue 153 57%
- 12 ↑ **F.E.A.R.**
Issue 161 90%
- 13 ↓ **BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES**
Issue 163 80%
- 14 ↑ **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**
Issue 152 95%
- 15 ↓ **ROME: TOTAL WAR - BARBARIAN INVASION**
Issue 160 88%
- 16 ↑ **ROME: TOTAL WAR**
Issue 148 93%
- 17 ↓ **NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED**
Issue 162 88%
- 18 (RE) **GUILD WARS**
Issue 156 94%
- 19 (RE) **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3**
Issue 149 79%
- 20 (RE) **MS FLIGHT SIM 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT**
Issue 133 89%



AGE OF EMPIRES III

A strong showing for the *Age Of Empires* warhorse, proving the slow-burn success of such an established franchise.



QUAKE 4

Quake 4 hasn't done the business that its publisher would have wanted, so in a quick word to the wise, you can pick it up pretty cheaply off the Net.



THE MOVIES

Now we were worried about *The Movies* – worried that the non-violent subject matter would put off punters. Thankfully, we were wrong.



GUILD WARS

The best little MMOG with the shittiest little name pops its head up at the foot of the charts. Exciting times for *Guilders* too – turn to p46 for more.



BET that's not wheelchair-accessible.

ARABIAN nights, like Arabian days...

NATIONS FALL, LEGENDS RISE

Rise Of Legends gets sand in its shoes

www.riseoflegends.com | ETA: March



LEONARDO DA VINCI was one of those people who walked the fine line between being a complete and utter genius and being that raving, bearded madman on the night bus. So we were interested to discover that Big Huge Games' next RTS endeavour in the *Rise* series will move away from the subject of nations and their tendencies to rise, and instead focus on a mystical fantasy world in which Da Vinci's inventive scrawlings come to life to do battle with Arabian-flavoured mythology.

What this will undoubtedly mean for fans of *Rise Of Nations* is that all the city-crafting goodness and army-building tactics will remain intact while the surroundings change to something a bit more imaginative. Within 20 minutes of booting up the early build sent to us from Microsoft towers, we had huge bronze buildings with massive gears and pistons, 12ft clockwork soldiers and all manner of bizarrely designed helicopters whizzing

about – and that was just the Vinci race. The Alim race, in contrast, has cities floating in mid-air, scarab beetles transporting trade goods and ancient warriors – as far as fantasy goes, *Rise Of Legends* is sporting a uniquely original style and we haven't even got our hands on the third race yet.

In terms of gameplay, each race is now be able to research a whole host of technologies, from the Vinci doom cannon to the Alim sand magic. An improved Conquer The World Campaign is being included too, along with a redesigned multiplayer mode, which promises to cater for people with 20-minute attention spans and hectic social lives.

Various other new features are also being added, such as the ability to quickly capture sites by storming them and the option to recruit heroes such as giant, hulking robots and devastatingly powerful mystical beasts which lay waste to everything around them. All that and not a *Da Vinci Code* reference in sight.



FLY my pretties! Fly!



I can't see my house from here.



A Gothic temple. Spooky isn't it?

Assassin Crazy-eyed killah

While the name may hint at stealth, this wouldn't really have worked within the confines of a fast-paced action game. Instead, the assassin is more of a nin, a character, in keeping with the faux-Asian setting, and is able to mete out death swiftly and violently. Armed with a pair of daggers, these can be deployed in a variety of combos to inflict concentrated melee damage. Whereas weak armour leaves the assassin vulnerable when face-to-face with a warrior, for instance, the ability to teleport to an enemy and slash his throat is not to be underestimated. He enjoys Scrabble and his favourite colour is red.



WHO was the poorly-masked man?

slightly Gothic-leaning Kurzicks. The twist is that both parties are sworn enemies – hence the *Factions* of the title – and which side you ally with will depend on which quests you choose.

You'll also be able to choose two new professions, ritualist and assassin, (see 'Assassin', above, and 'Ritualist', p47). Moreover, the PvP game has been enhanced, and there will be 55 challenge maps to compete for, as well as an all-new game type, known as PvE, as in player versus environment. I've dabbled with both. This is my story.

TURTLE Z

I began as an elfin young female assassin in the Kurzick outpost of Jade Quarry – it's appropriately named as it's essentially a huge jade quarry. It's a PvP map in which two teams go up against each other, with victory secured by a mythical creature transporting matter from one area to another. First to 15 wins. We had some kind of weird tall thing on our side, whereas the enemy had a giant turtle. Attacking it from the off, we crippled it but were beaten back by a troop of archers. Strategy was needed and for all my ninja combos and dagger sharpening I was regularly slain, and we went down to a narrow points defeat.

Moving on to a PvE map, I was a sultry ritualist in the shape of a tattooed lady with a gravity-defying top. With two teams of eight joining forces to slay a dragon living near a whirlpool in a petrified forest, it was carnage from the off as we waded into its minions. Summoning up an array of spirits, these gave strength to those in the immediate environs and eventually the beast was felled.

While not readily indistinguishable from the original *Guild Wars*, there should be enough new stuff in *Factions* to keep the massive fanbase happy, enabling you to dip in and out for various challenges.

As Jeff Strain maintains: "We don't want this to be an all-consuming lifestyle. You don't have to spend 40 hours a week playing the game in order to get any enjoyment out of it. It's not a traditional MMO, it's the evolution of online role-playing." With giant turtles. **PCZ**

IT'S an elf's life in the Guild.



HOPE they've got damp-proof.



It's not a traditional MMO, it's the evolution of online role-playing

Jeff Strain, co-founder, ArenaNet

explore some new environments and some new looks that are still recognisably fantasy in terms of the themes, but are a fresh take on it. Things you haven't seen in the past 25 years of playing *Dungeons & Dragons* and online role-playing games."

As for the story, it revolves around an event that took place 200 years ago, when the emperor was slain by his bodyguard, Shiro Tagachi. Two centuries on and Tagachi is back, once more wreaking havoc. As the story progresses, citizens will need the aid of either the Luxons, essentially a bunch of pseudo-pirates, or the

WHAT scared the petrified forest?



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BACK TO THE DARK AGES...

WORLD
EXCLUSIVE!

MEDIEVAL 2: TOTAL WAR

DEVELOPER The Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER Sega
WEBSITE www.totalwar.com

THE LOWDOWN

- Double the graphical detail of *Rome: Total War* ✓
- Unique-looking soldiers who attack using combos and finishing moves ✓
- Siege battles with multiple rings of defence ✓
- Massively improved settlement and castle-building features ✓
- No real-time naval battles ✗

ETA
2006



The sound of music

BAFTA winner at the helm once more



In a series as comprehensively impressive as *Total War*, it'd be all too easy to overlook the massive contribution that Jeff Van Dyck's masterful soundtracks have played, with each tune perfectly capturing both the context and atmosphere of each game's period.

Rather than taking the easy option of simply re-using his BAFTA-winning soundtracks from *Medieval* and its expansion packs, Jeff is composing a completely new set of tunes to keep time to your slaughtering exploits. However, unlike *Rome*, where the musical accompaniment depended on your faction, *Medieval 2* will mould its aural output to the location you're fighting in, meaning that even towards the end of a long campaign, you're unlikely to be reaching for the iPod.

Martin Korda gathers his medieval torturing tools to uncover details of the next instalment of the world's greatest RTS series...

"G O ON, HAVE A GUESS?"
"Napoleon: *Total War*?"
"Nope."

"Mutant Space Monkeys: *Total War*?"

"Sorry, wrong again."

"Mods Vs Rockers: *Total War*?"

"Close, but no cigar."

"Give up, dunno."

"It's..." drum rolls, fanfares, really

need a piss I'm so excited... "*Medieval 2: Total War*!"

That was about the extent of my conversation with ZONE's commander-in-chief Sefton about the imminent

announcement of the new *Total War* game, a discussion that concluded with me jiggling around the room in a urine-streaked stupor, while Sefton called security to have me removed from the building.

If you've played any of the *Total War* games before – most notably the latest instalment of the series, *Rome* – you'll understand my spontaneous impersonation of an incontinent Michael Flatley. Maybe you're even doing one yourself right now. After all, these pages are dripping with visuals so luscious they'd prompt even a 90-year-old arthritic drunk to rise from his

seat and dance around his colostomy bag from sheer delight. But as you're about to find out in this, the world's first-ever look at the latest instalment of the all-conquering *Total War* series, *Medieval 2* isn't just a visual feast – it's also packed with meaty goodness in the gameplay stakes, too.

RAMPING IT UP

Having appeased Sefton with flowers, chocolates and enough cash to put down a deposit on a new house in his native Yorkshire (£3.20 in real money), he re-instated me as the man chosen to speak

with Bob Smith – project director of the Australian CA team behind *Medieval 2*. And so, with medieval torturing tools at the ready – just in case he wouldn't talk – I met up with said Smith for an afternoon of interrogation and song. Actually, it was pretty much just interrogation, though I did have a rendition of *Killing Me Softly* ready, just in case the thumbscrew didn't work.

"Our aim is to improve upon the gameplay of *Rome* and bring its awesome gameplay to the medieval era, while raising the spectacle of the *Total War* series to a whole new level."



Settle down

Urban sprawl – *Medieval-style*



YOU'LL now be able to incorporate the landscape into your settlements and strongholds.

Towns and cities are set to take on an even greater strategic importance in *Medieval 2*, with CA determined to make full use of the hulking fortresses of the period. Unlike the previous games, where cities were almost always stuck in the middle of giant fields, *Medieval 2*'s settlements will be built around the environment, meaning you'll be able to incorporate cliffs and slopes into their layouts.

This'll also have a major impact on siege warfare, as attacking an elevated stronghold will create a whole new strategic dimension to the bloody proceedings. And as if that wasn't enough, castles will have multiple rings of defence, with each obstacle needing a different approach. So you might well find yourself blowing a hole in the main wall (all structures will now crumble far more realistically), then using a siege tower to penetrate the second one, before sending your pluckiest (or most stupid) unit to capture the gate, in order to breach the third barricade. Bring it on.

We're raising the bar right across the board, from the campaign map to the historical and multiplayer battles

Bob Smith, project director, *Medieval 2: TW*

Smith told me. "The period is renowned for huge castles, lots of armour, colourful flags and heraldry. We're raising the bar right across the board from the campaign map to the historical and multiplayer battles. The overall structure and gameplay will be similar to *Rome*'s, but it'll also incorporate some elements from the original *Medieval* such as the Pope and the Crusades."

MEDIEVAL BEAUTIES

I'm gonna go out on a limb here and guess you've probably already taken a sneaky peek at the rest of the pages of this preview, drooled lustfully on the pages and maybe even contacted your bank manager to discuss the possibility of a loan to cover the cost of a new graphics card. Well, for starters, you needn't panic if your machine's still packing a 'more mature' 3D card, because just like its predecessors, *Medieval 2*'s titanic battles will be massively scalable to cater to the power of your PC. And even though it's still too early to talk spec specifics, Smith seemed confident that *Medieval 2* is set to be every bit as friendly to OAP cards and processors as *Rome* was.

But what about if you've already taken out a third mortgage for a PC that'll enable you to play *Medieval 2* in all its glory?

What's in store for you? Well, for starters, *Medieval 2* is doubling, yes, doubling *Rome*'s polygon count.

"The amount of detail in some of the textures is amazing, right down to the names of programmers

"ON second thoughts, let's not go to Camelot. It is a silly place."



THE STORY SO FAR...

THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY



SCORE!

The company is formed and spends its first few years porting sports games for EA.



TOTAL REVOLUTION

The *Total War* series is born with *Shogun: Total War*. Huge sales quickly follow.



CRUSADING

Using a revamped *Shogun* engine, *Medieval: Total War* propels the series into the mainstream.



VENI, VIDI, VICI

The world's No.1 RTS developer confirms its presence with the mighty *Rome: Total War*.

1987

2000

2002

2004

CAREFUL. You'll have some f***er's eye out with that.



inscribed on gravestones in the churchyard," enthused Smith. "We've stripped down and fully refurbished large chunks of the *Rome* engine. The methods for building and rendering cities and units is completely new, and the combat animation system has been heavily revised."

UNIQUE KILLERS

Oh, but wait my slaving friends, we haven't even got to the good bit yet. Far from it. Y'see, up till now, *Total War* has been the largest, most realistic, adrenal-soaked cauldron of warfare ever to grace a videogame, where gargantuan armies batter each other into fleshy piles until one side stands victorious, knee-deep in every blood type under the sun. But there's always been one problem with this – all of the soldiers looked the same. Which is fine if you're making an RTS about *Star Wars Episode II*, but not ideal when making a historically accurate war simulation. All that, however, is about to change.

"In *Medieval 2*, we're removing the armies of clones that have been evident in the *Total War* series and many other RTS titles, and are introducing some individuality to the soldiers, in order to make battles more realistic and immersive," continued Smith, clearly eager to avoid an encounter with the rack I was busily constructing (£34.99 from Ikea). "In *Medieval 2*, units are made up of soldiers that are individuals. Each model is now made with several heads, bodies and limbs. The engine





A unit of death

We uncover some of *Medieval 2's* new death-bringers



Gothic knights: Wearing the kind of armour that'd repel a nuclear attack, these guys will be among the game's most deadly units, thanks to their fearsome lances and thunderous plate-armour-wearing steeds.



Elephants: If you thought *Rome's* big-nosed beasts were impressive, wait till you get a load of these floppy-eared destroyers, whose lumbering power will be further bolstered by mounted cannons.

Turkish bombard: Modelled on a devastating siege weapon used during the attack on Constantinople, you'll have to dig away into the ground before launching 1,000lb rocks at unsuspecting walls.

English longbowmen: Not only will they be able to shoot the nadders off a housefly in another time zone, they'll also be able to plant a line of stakes in front of their lines for some added protection.

Spanish/Italian musketeers: When they're not busy blathering on about comradeship, getting pissed and challenging each other to duels, these boys will prove a dab hand at bringing down even the most heavily-armoured adversary with their heavy guns.

combines these together to make each man far more individual. On top of this, there are also multiple variants for shields and weapons, so each soldier has character and each unit of men looks and behaves like a realistic group of soldiers."

FLASHY MOVES

I continued the relentless interrogation and soon uncovered perhaps the single most exciting info nugget of the afternoon, just as I was finishing erecting an iron maiden. "The combat is far more intense than in *Rome*, with the men realistically swinging, blocking and throwing combo moves," Bob Smith revealed. "More than that,

The combat is far more intense than in *Rome*, with soldiers realistically swinging, blocking and throwing combo moves

Bob Smith, project director, *Medieval 2: Total War*



fallen foes may even be dispatched with a devastating finishing move."

It's almost too good to be true. Gone are the mindless, hacking soldiers of *Rome*, replaced instead by warriors who attack each other with the brutality of a Millwall fan after closing time.

"For example, a swordsman might swing to the left, then to the right, before following up with a stab to the stomach that'll knock his opponent down," continued Smith. "He might then spin around and deliver a merciless finishing strike to the enemy while he's lying helpless on the ground." A spearman meanwhile, could apparently concentrate on jabbing and trying to keep

the swordsman at range. If he gets too close, he could actually throw the assailant back with a shield barge, then run him violently through with a spear.

"You'll see these kind of moves being executed all over the battlefield and as soldiers fall, you'll see those still standing continually scanning their surroundings for their next kill. Touches like these make the huge battles so much more realistic and immersing, whether you're zoomed in on the front line or looking on from a distance." And if that's not enough to get you excited, Smith also revealed that you can look forward to combatants gradually

acquiring layers of blood on their armour that's splattered from their vanquished foes.

NOWHERE TO RUN, NOWHERE TO HIDE

As well as the skirmishes themselves, terrain has always played an integral part in ensuring *Total War*'s gritty realism. But just when you thought this already monumentally lifelike battle simulator couldn't possibly get any better, another sublime addition comes along to prove you wrong. Through the use of impassable obstacles, *Medieval 2* looks like it could raise the realism bar by yet another notch.

Up till now, *Total War* battlegrounds have only ever been seriously constricted by the boundaries of the map. Whether schlepping over flatlands or rolling tree-covered hills, your armies could move almost anywhere with little or no constriction. But this luxury of being able to retreat without too much thought for your surroundings will now be a thing of the past.

"In general, there'll be more terrain on the battlefield, with impassable cliffs and banks, walls and hedges and more buildings," beamed Smith. "The wise commander will be able to use these features to great advantage to protect his flanks and front, as



NOW would be a good time to move.



LOOKS so real you can almost smell the blood.





SURPRISINGLY, metal balaclavas and nipple-helmets were once the height of fashion.



Not only will these night battles be glorious spectacles, there are also tactical nuances to consider alongside them

Boh Smith, project director, *Medieval 2: Total War*

well as to disrupt enemy manoeuvres. Mud could also be a problem for heavily-armoured troops, cavalry and infantry, so we'll be reflecting this in the game, too."

FIRE AND WATER

The Creative Assembly's outfit in Australia is also ensuring that the excellent innovations from *Rome: Total War – Barbarian Invasion* are being translated into *Medieval 2*, including horses and lightly-armoured troops having the ability to swim across rivers in order to attack enemy lines.

Also making a welcome return from *Rome's* debut expansion pack are the night-time battles, which Smith promised would be even more spectacular this time around



thanks to fearsome cannons that'll be able to cripple cities and ravage them with flames. "Not only will these night battles be glorious spectacles, there'll also be tactical nuances to consider," he professed. "The ability to fight night battles is a character trait, and Generals without the trait will be at a disadvantage. Artillery is also less effective under a blanket of darkness."

LOST AT SEA

If there's one disappointing piece of news about *Medieval 2*, it's that it'll still be bereft of real-time naval battles. However, from what Smith told me, this isn't so much an omission as a determination to ensure that when *Total War* does eventually incorporate

sea-based battles into its already towering arsenal of war modes, it'll be every bit as captivating, thrilling and entertaining as its on-land counterparts.

"Creating full-scale 3D naval battles is a huge task. Creating them to a standard that befits the *Total War* series is an even bigger one," he explained. "We decided not to include them this time. Naval combat will be handled similarly to the system employed in *Rome*, but it'll be polished and tweaked."

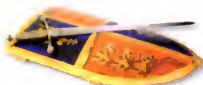
GAME OF TWO HALVES

Writing articles about *Total War* games often feels like a two-part process. That's because these titles are actually two games of equal quality



UPON this charge, cry: "God for Harry! England and Saint George!"





Test the nation

More factions, more diversity, more racial intolerance



England: Pincered by two age-old enemies (Scotland and France), Blighty will start off economically frail, though militarily mighty, thanks to its legions of knights and spearmen. Later, it'll specialise in longbowmen and dismounted knights.

France: Protected by the fearsome Feudal Knights, the French will start off loaded, but their nancyboy foot soldiers might ruin even the most well laid plans by hoisting the white flag before a single shot's been fired, then heading off for a three-hour lunch.



Scotland: Making their debut in *Total War*, these highland lugs are powered by a diet of battered sweets and sheep intestines. And they'll need all the help they can get if their spearmen and powerful but unreliable highlanders are to hold off the Sassenachs.

Venice: Not only will these rich boys have to contend with having a weak army and holdings that are strung out across the map, they'll also have to contend with other hardships such as the crippling Cornetto famine of 1322.

Like a prom queen covered in jam and swimming in a vat of money, this looks too good to be true

– 3D real-time battles and the campaign map – wrapped up in one sublime package, and *Medieval 2* is no exception. So without further ado, let's move on and see what Smith had to reveal – with a little medieval-style coaxing – about the second section.

"The campaign map will be busier, with several new types of agent, including merchants, princesses and priests," he began. "These will afford more opportunities for non-military interaction with the other factions. To compensate, there's a new recruitment system and castles will require less management than cities."

"As such, you'll face a fundamental choice with each settlement. You can develop it as a

castle and emphasise the military, or as a city and emphasise the economy. As the game develops, cities will become more important but re-developing castles will be costly, so the transition will need to be carefully managed."

Of course, the medieval period wasn't only notorious for its bitter land disputes, humongous fortresses, subterfuge, betrayal, brutality and inhumanity, but also for its religiously-motivated wars, most notably the Crusades. And while this feature did play a part in *Medieval*, it seems that it'll play a far more prominent role here, with the

Pope himself calling a crusade that all catholic factions can choose to join. The faction that

captures the target first gains considerable prestige and wealth, and you'll also need to keep on the Pope's good side. However, when the old codger dies – for whatever reason – you can don your religious robes and vote in the election of a new one – and getting one of your own cardinals elected will help in securing good relations. "Organised religion isn't the only concern though," says Smith, "as there are also heretics and witches spreading chaos and superstition." Better start stockpiling that firewood...

SAME DIFFERENCE

One of the pitfalls of making a sequel to a game as comprehensive as *Medieval* is the prospect of making the two games'

"WE want. A shrubbery!"



campaign maps too similar, but CA Australia is clearly doing an admirable job of avoiding a prevailing sense of déjà vu in this follow-up. *Medieval 2*'s hugely expansive campaign map, which encompassed Europe, North Africa and Asia Minor, will now be even more impressive thanks to the addition of South America to *Medieval 2*.

Initially, these far-western lands will be hidden from you and the squares of the Atlantic Ocean will be impassable. However, later in the game, you'll be able to develop the technology to cross the ocean, discover America and battle with the Aztecs. You have to watch your back though – what the Aztecs lack in military technology they more than make up for in bravery and sheer

numbers. So, while the Americas are there to be conquered, the Aztecs aren't likely to welcome unwanted visitors.

FEAST OF FEATURES

Like a prom queen covered in jam and swimming in a vat of money, *Medieval 2* looks almost too good to be true, yet given The Creative Assembly's pedigree, it's close to impossible doubting it can deliver a supreme RTS experience.

With the careers of Richard the Lionheart, Saladin, Robert 'I ratted out Mel Gibson' the Bruce and Henry V all set to feature in standalone historical battles, along with a reprisal of *Shogun: Total War*'s video clip assassinations – each

carrying multiple outcomes – and natural disasters and plagues threatening to cripple even your most well laid plans, we can't wait. Add to that the all-new yet to be announced multiplayer features (not even an impromptu rendition of the Roberta Flack classic could break Bob Smith's granite-like resolve on that one) and revamped trading elements that'll include monopolies and hostile acquisitions, and *Medieval 2* is looking like it could take another giant leap forward from its predecessors and maintain the irresistible momentum of a series that never ceases to amaze. And if *Medieval 2* does fully live up to its promise, then the *Total War* series could be on the brink of becoming totally untouchable. **PCZ**



AN army marches on its stomach. And its horses.



AS crowded as that scene at the end of *Crocodile Dundee*.



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www.pegi.info

Produced by
Omega Force

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PCZONE

REVIEWS

Scaling the heights of PC gaming

SECTION EDITOR Paul Presley

Loose Ends

WELL, TIME TO tie up all those outstanding issues that have come to light over my last 13 years, but have never been adequately explained. The golden sceptre was actually hidden inside one of Lady Marston's bedposts all along. Rosebud was his childhood sleigh. Although the coroner performed a full autopsy, the poison had long since left his bloodstream. After spilling the beans on the family, Tommy is shot leaving the diner. Kevin Spacey is Keyser Soze. It was actually the previous night that Jennings planted the rope in the cupboard, although this never came to light. Harrison Ford's character was guilty. Turns out you are Darth Malak - who knew? Jackson was sentenced to five years but only served three, the term being reduced after saving the governor's kitten. Soylent Green is people. Will Porter was created from the DNA strands of previous ZONE writers in an effort to create a SuperJourno. *World Of Warcraft* does have a hidden ending, but it only makes sense if you play through the last 60 levels backwards. Although I was around since issue one, my first review appeared in issue two. And with that, I'm gone.



GAME OF THE MONTH

62

SWAT 4:
THE STETCHKOV
SYNDICATE

Law enforcers extraordinaire

The PC ZONE Awards



CLASSIC (90%+)
The best games ever. If you're lucky enough to see one, stop and buy it.



RECOMMENDED (75-89%)
Pretty, pretty, pretty. Any game that turns ZONE's head is worthy of your love.



DUMP (0-19%)
Don't shirk your duty - it's the only responsible thing to do to a game like this.

AND THE REST



ONLINE ONLY
Don't have an Internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



EXPANSION PACK
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know - life's not fair.



ON THE DISCS
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

The PC Class System

Not all games are created equal, so how do you know if your PC's up to the job? Using real science, we've graded your system from 1-5. Match it with the icon on each review to see if your PC will play the game. We review all games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Alienware Area-51.

	1	2	3	4	5
CPU	1.2GHz	1.8GHz	2.4GHz	3.0GHz	3.8GHz
RAM	128MB	256MB	512MB	1GB	1GB
Video	32MB	128MB	256MB	512MB	512MB

ALSO REVIEWED

- 62 SWAT 4: THE STETCHKOV SYNDICATE
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Buy this little lot

Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are our highest award, with only the best games deemed worthy of honour. These are our personal top tips for sheer gaming excellence...

PCZONE
SWEARS...

- To only review code signed off by the publishers AND the developers
- To give you our honest opinion. We're gamers. We love games. And we hate bad ones. Just like you
- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
- To hang up on companies who say that 79% isn't a good score. What do they know?
- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at yourshout@pczone.co.uk



SWAT 4: THE STETCHKOV SYNDICATE

There's violence on the streets and it's time for *Anthony Holden* to become a proper constable

DEVELOPER Irrational Games
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.swat4.com
ETA March 3
PRICE £19.99



AT A GLANCE...

Seven new levels and a sprinkling of extra features add new life to last year's top cop shooter. Plenty of flaws remain, but there's enough here to keep fans happy.

System requirements

HOW IT STACKS

SWAT 4 **86%**

RAINBOW SIX 3:
RAVEN SHIELD **84%**

SWAT 4: THE
STETCHKOV
SYNDICATE **77%**

SCANNING DOWN THE list of new features available in *SWAT 4: The Stetchkov Syndicate* – the first expansion pack for last year's crackingly good tactical shooter – my reactions went something like this: "Who cares, so what, should've been in the first game, big deal, ooh that's quite good, who cares." In other words, it's not all that impressive, on paper at least.

Some particularly redundant additions include delights such as 'new armour type: no armour' – a negative option presumably offered for madmen who'd rather lighten their load than stop a bullet entering their

chest cavity. Along similar lines are new enemy pistols and machine guns (only Americans care for such things), a vague semblance of plot and some minor server browser improvements.

In practice, however, it's a more promising story. Yes, in the most part *Stetchkov* is just your basic, contractually-obligated mission disk with a brace of new levels and a handful of petty changes that could easily have turned up in a patch. But despite the initially lightweight impressions, there are two or three features

here that are actually pretty great, and (assuming you've already enjoyed the main game), will bring new joy to your law enforcement adventures.

Of course, there's also quite a bit of material that falls under the category of 'quite good things that should've been there



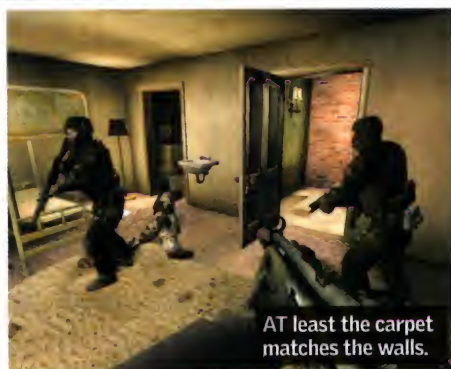


in the first place', including proper voice comms (hoorah), night-vision goggles, an ammo pouch for carrying extra clips, a skin-changer for multiplayer and, answering one of our biggest beefs with the original game, the option of selecting a team leader in co-op games – a crucial addition that brings a badly-needed dose of order to the online chaos. You can even vote for a new leader mid-level – especially handy if your man breaks down and reveals a history of alcohol abuse.

HOLD THAT THOUGHT

In single-player, the big news is 'held commands', where you can set delayed orders for your teams and then initiate them later. So, if you've got a room with multiple entry points, you can set the red team at the front door poised to 'open, gas and clear', stick the blue team on the back door ready to 'breach and clear', while you either take another door, control one of the sniper views or just mill around shouting things. Once everyone's in place, you give the go-command and your lads pile in with clockwork precision and arrest everyone (hopefully).

In reality of course, things can still go tits-up. In particular, the system is strangely flaky, often managing to forget



your first order by the time the second is in place. If you treat it gently, however, it's a wonderful thing and genuinely changes the way that you play the game. Not only does it let you indulge in more tactical and devious manoeuvres, it allows you to exploit your resources much more fully, revealing for the first time the true value of having two fire teams.

Other additions include chemical light-sticks that can be dropped in cleared areas (like a sort of fluorescent breadcrumb trail) to help avoid backtracking – quite useful in the

Bad Lieutenant

Being a good cop does not make for a fun game



One big problem with the *SWAT* games is that complying with police procedures (such as not killing everything that moves) is, frankly, a bit tedious. Much more fun, surely, would be a game in which you had the choice whether to play it by the book or not.

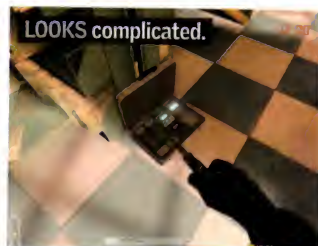
So, if you wanted to play the boy scout you could – reporting regularly to dispatch, going for promotions and medals and so on. If you didn't want to do it that way, however (and I think this applies to most of us), you could play it more in the style of Vic Mackey from *The Shield*. So, when you found some drugs, rather than reporting them, you could steal the evidence and sell it for profit. When one of your men accidentally killed a hostage, you could cover it up by faking evidence and making the victim fire off a few pistol rounds from their limp, dead hands.

It could be a brave new direction for the genre, peeling back the heroic façade of the force to reveal the corrupt, rotten truth, and it'd be great.

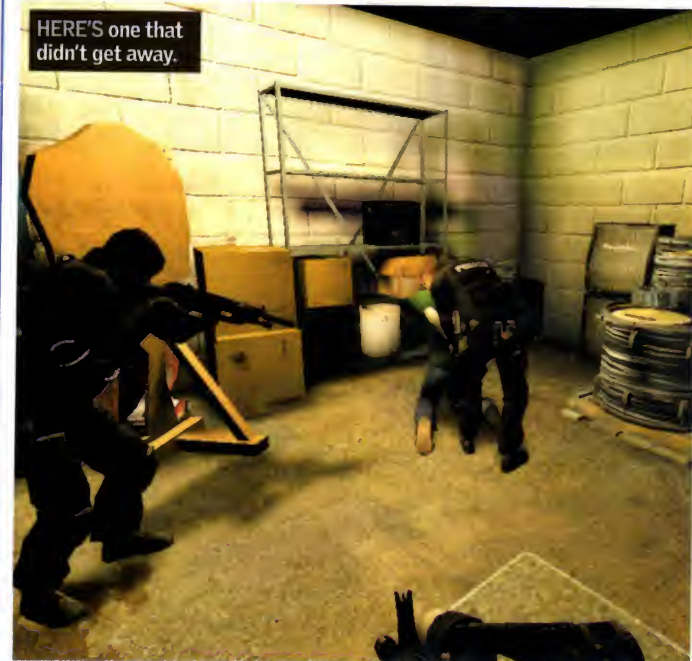
Despite initial impressions, there are two or three features that are actually pretty great



REVIEW SWAT 4: STETCHKOV



Taser Trouble Angry farmers immune to debilitating jolts?



The enemies in *The Stetchkov Syndicate* are meant to be a bit tougher than usual, because they've been equipped with the latest military gear by a Russian crime syndicate. That's all well and good, except that they're now so tough they're practically superhuman. I shot one with the (new improved) Taser gun, watched him convulse a bit, punched him a couple of times, shouted at him to drop his weapon, and still he managed to recover, raise his still-held weapon and kill me. Now, I'm no scientist, but according to my research, the Taser gun delivers a debilitating 50,000 volt jolt, and anyone hit with one loses all control of their muscles and collapses instantly. So what's going on? Are these guys immune? Did I just get killed by Magneto? Enquiring minds want to know.



If you treat the system gently it's a wonderful thing and genuinely changes the way you play the game

larger levels. The bots also now respond to some voice commands, much as in the *Rainbow Six* games.

BETTER WITH TEN

Given the success of *SWAT 4* online, it's no surprise to find a few crowd-pleasing embellishments to the multiplayer arsenal as well. For a start, the superb co-op mode has been boosted to ten players max, which allows for two teams of five. Unfortunately, this doesn't make it twice as good, and in practice very few levels are big enough to cater for such a hefty police presence; but it does make the game's best mode that much more flexible.

Slightly more appealing is the new multiplayer game type, Smash and Grab. In concept it's frankly dull – one team is SWAT, the other Suspects; a briefcase spawns somewhere in the map and the suspects have to find and extract it, with the limitation that the person carrying the case can only walk and fire a sidearm.

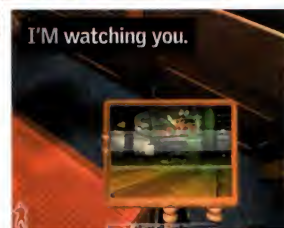
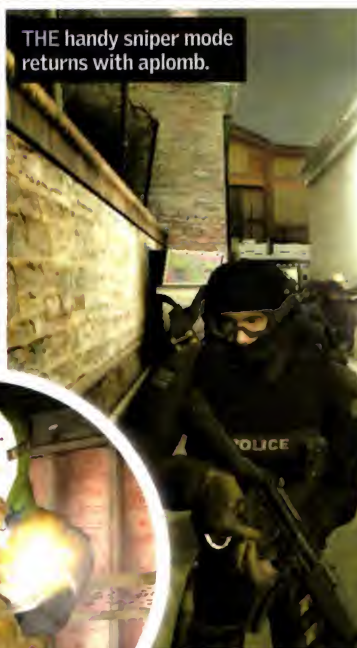
However, there's also a time limit in place, and (here's the good part) the suspects lose 30 seconds off the clock for every non-lethal arrest made by SWAT. Without this twist, Smash and Grab would be just another copycat game mode, but the specific rules actually make it one of the more interesting, and the best at encouraging non-lethal takedowns.

Incidentally, there's also now a lobby for the quick mission maker, so you and your friends can set up the parameters and launch a map-on-the-fly rather than saving it in advance – which is just the sort of change that makes you wonder how it could ever have been otherwise.

SYNDICATE WARS

Of course, improvements and tweaks aside, the real meat here is the clutch of new missions – seven of them in total. In accordance with the amusing subtitles, the missions are themed around the idea that some dirty Russkies are flooding the streets





with cheap, high-quality weapons and armour. It's pitched as a proper storyline, but in reality it's just a thin excuse to make a bunch of normal SWAT missions a bit tougher – because of course, all the bad guys have been supplied by the Stetchkovs. So, in mission three, you get a bunch of crazy bible-bashers raiding a death metal gig – with assault rifles. In mission four, you get a cadre of disgruntled farmers trying to blow up the agriculture ministry – with briefcase bombs and Tec 9s. It's all very silly, and handled in the usual tongue-in-cheek fashion of the main game.

The quality of the missions varies wildly, but overall I'd have to say they're a bit disappointing. Aside from a couple of the later maps they're all quite unremarkable in both concept and layout, and we wouldn't be surprised to find out some of them were rejigged cast-offs from the original game.

The first mission, for example, acts as a kind of refresher course on basic sweep-

and-clear tactics, and is almost insultingly simple. The second and third missions are also very straightforward – conceptually limp, they rely merely on odd-shaped rooms and multiple entry points to provide intrigue.

Only when you reach the fourth map – an office building with its guts ripped open by an explosion – do you find a bold visual concept to complement the room-clearing action.

Needless to say, once the early remedial section is out of the way, the missions also become extremely punishing. The original game was tough, but with the extra enemy fire-power, and an increased unwillingness to go down without a fight, the difficulty

is ramped very high indeed – enough to ensure you'll have to play some of the levels dozens of times before you succeed. (Which





"GUYS, guys – surely we can talk about this?"
(Hold) Restrain Civilian



DON'T drink, don't smoke, what do you do?

NO SMOKING
UNLESS YOU'RE ON FIRE
DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!



WHO lives in a house like this?

Co COME out with your flippers in the air.



THE kids from *Grange Hill* were so ahead of their time.

The AI is good compared to many similar examples, but it still manages to trip up with alarming regularity

is convenient when you've only got seven new missions to go around.)

OFFICE FIXTURES

Elsewhere, some broader problems remain, though as these are hangovers from the original game it's perhaps a little unfair to expect them to have been remedied in an add-on pack. One is, of course, the lack of

proper object physics. It may seem churlish to mention this again after we laboured the point last time, but what the hell – on at least two occasions it caused one of my troops to get stuck behind a door or piece of office furniture, so the pain is still fresh.

Another big problem is the AI. Despite the fact that it's fairly good compared to many similar examples (though I must say that Prezzer got a little bit carried away when he described it as "blisteringly good"), it still manages to trip up with alarming regularity. The entire tactical squad-based genre in fact, has always been hamstrung by its AI, and as far as I'm concerned the problem remains.

However, something more worrying that emerged in the course of playing *Stetchkov* – perhaps because the levels aren't that great, perhaps because the concept has been stretched too thin – is that the gameplay is really quite repetitive. The whole routine of coming to a doorway, deploying your Optiwand, storming the room, arresting the suspects, cuffing them, picking up the weapons, reporting it all to dispatch – it all just becomes a bit of a chore after the hundredth room or so.

Still, you can punch and electrocute civilians to make them co-operate, and quite frankly that'll never get old. **PC4**

PCZONE

Graphics A few years off the pace
Sound Some annoyingly repetitive ambient sounds; otherwise good
Multiplayer The best thing here

- ✓ Co-op's still great and now has team leaders
- ✓ Invaluable 'held orders' feature
- ✓ Some new weapons and gadgets
- ✗ AI still struggles
- ✗ Several bland missions
- ✗ Unnecessarily punishing

77
Does the job

TOMORROW'S WAR



CONTINUES MARCH 2006



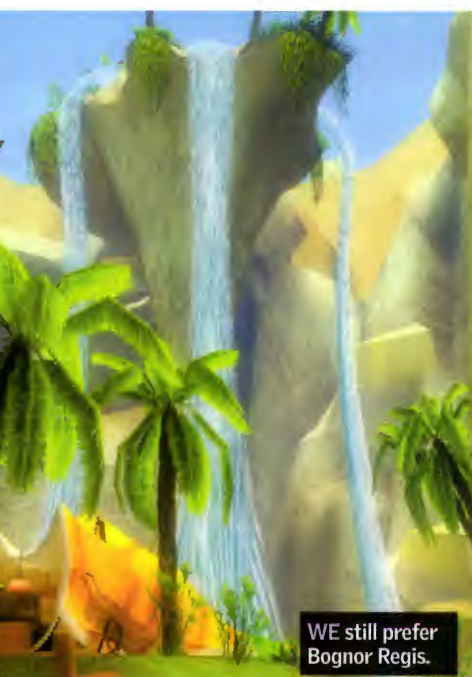
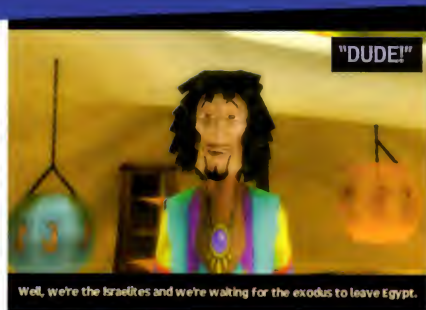
ACT of WAR

HIGH TREASON



THE BEST RTS OF 2005, ACT OF WAR: DIRECT ACTION, IS BACK.
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ANKH

Paul Presley has good reason to steer clear of the 'w' key for this one...

DEVELOPER Deck 13 Interactive Studios
PUBLISHER bhv Software
WEBSITE www.ankh-game.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99



AT A GLANCE...

Cartoon point-and-click fun in the manner of, but not as good as, the *Monkey Island* series.

System requirements

2

HOW IT STACKS

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND 82%

ANKH 68%

THE LONGEST JOURNEY 59%

YES, THERE WAS lots of preconceived fun with the name before it arrived, and to be fair we weren't expecting very much from *Ankh*. A point-and-click adventure in this day and age (strike one), an unheard of German developer and an unknown publisher (strike two). A title song-and-dance sequence that felt like a sub-par version of any Disney film you've been dragged to go and see by young 'uns (strike three and heeee's out of heeeeerre).

But perseverance is a virtue apparently (just ask the French, still battling away and insisting they've got a 'proper' country and everything, bless 'em). And so, after several hours of play, I have to say I was warming to this cartoon romp through a decidedly historically inaccurate Ancient Egypt.

PYRAMID SCHEME

As far as the plot goes, we're dealing with the comic adventures of Egyptian teenager Assil and his attempts to rid himself of an ancient 'death curse' that was placed on him by a diseased mummy after he desecrated a burial tomb in a newly-built pyramid. This involves traversing the local Cairo marketplace, exploring the desert, breaking

into a Pharaoh's palace, dealing with gods, guards, crocodiles and the usual assortment of quirky characters that generally made up the cast in these types of games circa the late '90s.

MONKEY DO

Apparently, Deck 13 has been 'assisted' by Telltale Studios, responsible for *Bone: Out From Boneville*, the new *Sam & Max* game and, tellingly, *Escape From Monkey Island*.

Those *Monkey Island* inspirations are readily apparent. Pacing is impressive, with just enough of the game opening out in front of you at any one time to keep you interested. There's also a good sense of characterisation and setting being developed as you progress, along with an understanding that puzzle structure works best when it comes through interaction, dialogue and integration with the surroundings, rather than simply throwing



Hey, Hey It's The Monkey Islands

More knowing irony please



SHE speaks the truth.

Guy Al Brusha? But he went to sea and never came back!



TAKE a seat.

a selection of parlour games and crate-pushing around uninvolved FMV sequences.

Although *Ankh* is far from reaching the satire, wit, subtlety, ingeniousness, irony, surrealism and balls-out funniness of the venerable *Monkey* classics, it certainly isn't without a charm and appeal of its own. Sure, we're looking at a younger audience in terms of a lot of the humour, but there's just enough in the way of depth to push it more towards the cooler Dreamworks section of the animation spectrum rather than the cloying and sappy Disney end. It's the kind of game that a family can enjoy together, and perhaps is best in that sense. Ironic gen-Xers and urban wiggers probably won't get much from it, but then that's why games like *Need For Speed* and *GTA* exist.

CROOKED-SHANK

There are faults with *Ankh* though, and enough to prevent it from reaching recommended status. For a start, it's not the most advanced game in terms of visual technology and the humour is sometimes forced. Also, the voice-acting is good but not great, and there isn't enough range in voice types either, giving the impression of only having two or three actors being used.

More than that, it's of limited appeal outside of a nowadays niche audience, especially as it fails to live up to the standards of the *Monkey Island* and *Sam & Max* games. But it is fun, and provided you

OK, so Tell tale has helped out a little here and there with *Ankh*, and as if to say thanks you'll occasionally spot the odd homage or two along the way. The most notable example is while trying to con an elderly lady that you're her heir apparent. There are also some more subtle nods and winks to enjoy, such as the entire sequence in which you find yourself trapped underwater and have to solve a series of puzzles to escape, or the bizarre inventory list ripe for odd combinations. There are also several 'breaking the fourth wall' moments and knowing references to being in a game. All good fun, and it helps to raise *Ankh* above more pedestrian adventures.

approach it with a carefree, happy-go-lucky attitude and don't expect the greatest adventure ever told, you'll most likely get a fair slice of entertainment out of *Ankh*. More than you would by adding a 'w' anyway. **PC**

PCZONE

Graphics **Fun in places, but undemanding**
Sound **Competent voice-acting, but limited**
Multiplayer **None**

- ✓ Well-structured story
- ✓ Good puzzles
- ✓ Can be genuinely amusing
- ✗ Can also be a little forced
- ✗ Not the most advanced game ever made
- ✗ Voice-acting needs variety

68

Diamond Giza



WHEN central heating goes wrong.

AMERICAN CONQUEST: DIVIDED NATION

Conquer your boredom

DEVELOPER GSC Game World
PUBLISHER CDV Entertainment
WEBSITE www.cdv.de
ETA February 10
PRICE £19.99

System requirements **2**

NOW LET'S FACE it, the American civil war was not the most interesting of conflicts for a game. In fact, we've seen drunken scuffles outside The Pig Fancier's Arms of a Friday night that would make a more compelling backdrop for an RTS game. Nevertheless, GSC Game World has decided to drag us by the knees through a standalone expansion for its 19th century war game *American Conquest*.

We can certainly see the appeal of *Divided Nation*: all of the historical battles are there, the uniforms and generals are authentic-looking, and even the maps are topographically correct. The problem is that if you have as much interest in America's war-torn heritage as, say, a Canadian, the game quickly degenerates into

THE planting party proved a huge hit.



a mindless click-fest around fields, searching for foreigners to bayonet.

It certainly has a historically accurate and original approach to the genre, although this is often at the expense of gameplay. Armies are allocated to you at the start of each campaign (numbering in the thousands), and it takes a certain level of tactical prowess and organisational skill to manipulate such huge forces well.

While *American Conquest: Divided Nation* is sure to have civil war buffs drooling over its adherence to historical accuracy, from a strategic gameplay point of view, it's not exactly going to give the more established and, let's be honest, more technologically advanced RTS games like *Rome: Total War* or *Cossacks II* a run for their money.

Andy Robinson



PCZONE

55

Toy soldiers



COMPLETE certain objectives and you'll unlock special events like Chinese New Year.



"PANDA watch. The mood is tense..."

TYCOON CITY: NEW YORK

Martin Korda starts spreading the news and naming it twice in the home of both *Ghostbusters I* and *II*...

DEVELOPER Deep Red
PUBLISHER Atari

WEBSITE
www.atari.com/tycooncity
ETA February 24
PRICE £34.99

AT A GLANCE...

A sprawling and colourful tycoon game in which you build up New York City one section at a time, catering to the unique needs of each district while ensuring you earn enough cash to blow your AI-controlled competitors out of the water.

System requirements

2

HOW IT STACKS

THE SIMS 2 82%

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3 79%

TYCOON CITY: NEW YORK 70%

DEVELOPER DEEP RED is starting to make quite a name for itself in the much maligned tycoon genre, a reputation that it's been hoping to cement with the release of this ambitiously sprawling tycoon game. But has it pulled it off, or is this money-making, skyscraper-constructing sim – in which you're tasked with building up the Big Apple (well, Manhattan Island) piece by gridlocked piece – just another 'lead you by the hand patronise-othor' destined for obscurity, like the majority of the genre's offerings? Well, if truth be told, it's a bit of both.

Tycoon City, as Deep Red has readily explained, is a game directed at the less hardcore gamer, which probably means the kind of part-time virtual entertainment enthusiast who dedicates the odd evening between candlelight soirees and Conservative party meets to playing *The Sims* and *Puzzle Bobble*. And, as Deep Red is no doubt hoping, *Tycoon City: New York*.





Seeing The Sites

Building the landmarks that made New York great – but not the ones below...



GREENWICH Church is one of the smaller landmarks you can build.



GREENWICH Courthouse Library: a landmark with a severe case of schizophrenia.



About as taxing as duty-free, any hardened gamer could play this in their sleep

the world's most exciting and ethnically diverse cities. Chinese New Year is celebrated by a giant street carnival, Little Italy is packed with quaint pizzerias while Soho is full of pretentious twats blathering on about Gucci and pretending to appreciate modern art, rather than scoffing at the talentless child-like doodlings that it so usually is.

"Show them what the Statue of Liberty looks like! Go on! No wait, show them the Empire State Building!" So came the cries of my fellow game journos as I started writing this boxout.

But you know what? I'm not going to do it... Why? Because the moments when you unveil these stunning landmarks to your gawping citizens constitute some of the game's most satisfying moments. Showing you them all now would simply dilute the sense of satisfaction you gain when you erect a famous land-mark. So instead, here are a couple of lesser-known ones to whet your appetite for the towering delights that lie ahead...

Each segment of New York comes with its very own space for a monument, which can be built once you've accumulated enough Landmark Bonds. These are earned by completing Opportunities and by reaching financial milestones. Thankfully, with both of these tasks proving fairly easy, it won't be long till you're looking up the Statue of Liberty's toga and wondering what kind of pants she's wearing.

BUILDERS, EH?

Build what is required of you to the correct standard and you'll be rewarded by amusing news reports extolling the virtues of your ever-growing empire. You'll also be treated to



Y'see, this game is about as taxing as duty-free, the kind of title that any hardened gamer could play in their sleep. Broken down into bite-sized chunks, *Tycoon City* divides New York into a series of manageable portions, which you must build up to a certain standard before the next one is unlocked. In order to complete a section, you must construct accommodation, businesses and educational establishments to satiate the needs of the city's citizens. After this you can kit each building out with an array of signs, plants, billboards and other decorations to increase its public appeal and aesthetic qualities. And that, I'm afraid, is about as complex as the game gets.

A CITY WITH CHARACTER

Of course there are some excellent features injected into the game's mix, too. After all, we don't award 70 per cent to games that have been shat straight into a DVD box and put on a shelf reeking of amateurism. And it's these fun features that manage to transform a fairly run-of-the-mill gaming experience into something a little more, well, satisfying.

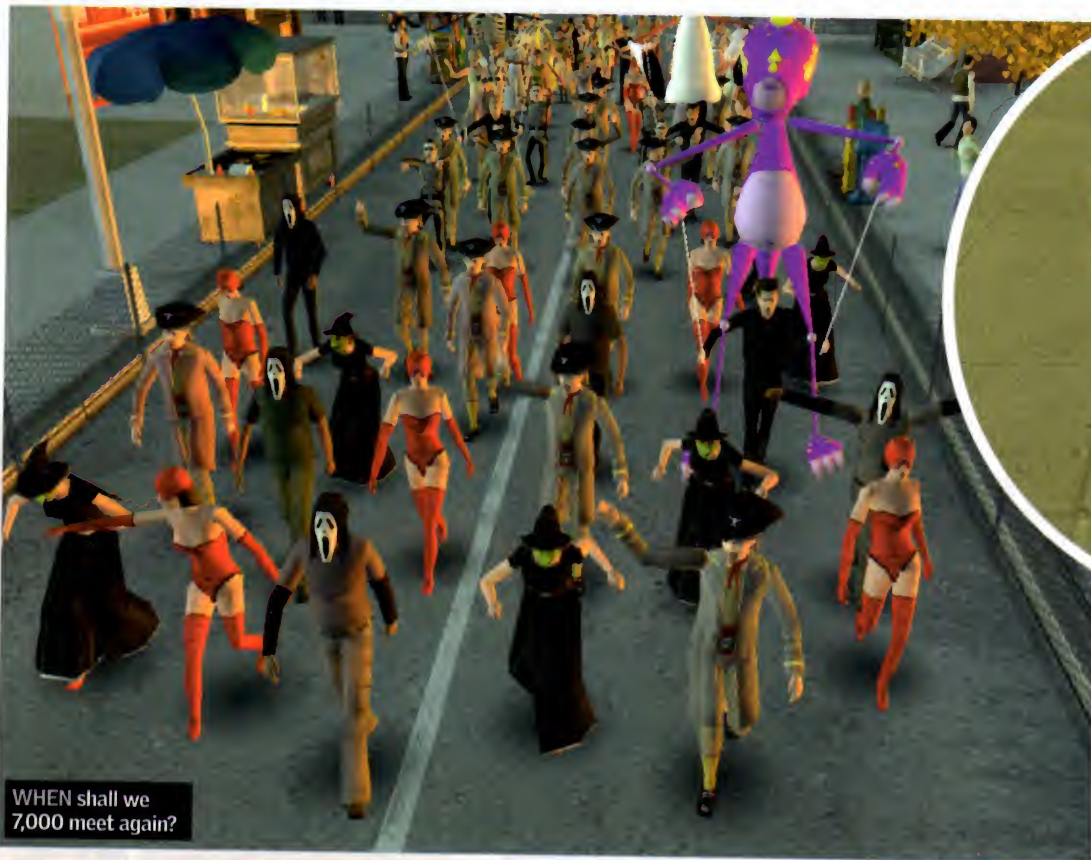
The game's most noteworthy and entertaining moments come in the form of character-based missions that drive the otherwise sandbox-like campaign (there's also an undiluted Sandbox mode should you wish to just build up your city without interruptions). Every so often you'll be transported to hotspots where characters – be they penniless students looking for a place to get pissed up, or disillusioned poets looking for inspiration in the park – deliver well-written and highly convincing segments of exposition that encourage you to cater to their needs.

What follows are a collection of objectives (or Opportunities as they're called) that urge you to construct certain buildings and improve them to the point where they satisfy the mewling denizens. This might involve improving a park so that people can take a stroll during their lunch break, or building up a stretch of road so that it's aesthetically pleasing enough to stage a Halloween parade.

Deep Red has clearly done its New York homework, perfectly capturing the cosmopolitan and cultural diversity of one of



REVIEWSTYCOON CITY: NEW YORK



WHEN shall we
7,000 meet again?



SEFTON'S on
his way.



CHEAP housing accommodates lots of people, but
none of them will have much money to spend.



YEAH! Get down!

visually luscious events such as the aforementioned parades and carnivals. But while these scripted tasks do add a wealth of character to the game, they also betray its most major flaw. Just like many other tycoon games before it, *New York* suffers from a chronic bout of 'lead you by the hand' syndrome. Mama wants her son to build up a pizza empire, so you build three pizzerias and a Pizza headquarters. Some punks want somewhere to party, so you build a Punk club and stick a burger bar

nearby for good measure. People are hungry, so you build restaurants. They're bored, so you build some bars... And so it goes on, ad infinitum.

BY NUMBERS

It's all there in black and white, straightforward instructions and tasks solved by simply building exactly what you're being asked to. Add to this the fact that there's no building degeneration, virtually no city maintenance and zero natural disasters to concern yourself with, and you suddenly realise that all you're doing from one hour to the next is erecting exactly what you're being instructed to.

But wait, surely building placement and supply and demand play a part? Well yes, they do. To an extent. Y'see, the beauty and the problem with *Tycoon City* is that whenever you place a building on a plot of land, you're immediately shown exactly how in demand it'll be in the surrounding area. If the majority of buildings light up green, then you're good to go. Yellow is OK, while red is bad. So if you're thinking of building an Italian restaurant in Chinatown, only to realise it won't be very popular, all you have to do is keep clicking on the other eatery options till you find one that'll suit that section of the city. If it lights up yellow, you're good to go. Simple and sadly, utterly repetitive.

With the game sussed and with the somewhat clunky interface mastered, it becomes only a matter of time till the

malaise sets in. Before you know it you're raking in so much money you're wiping your arse with 50 dollar notes just to clear out some space in the local bank vaults, buying every major rival business and repeating the same trial and error building process time and time again. Don't get me wrong, it is fun for a while, but if you're a hardened strategy game veteran (or even a partially solidified one), you're likely to feel less challenged than a genius in a kindergarten. What's more, your AI-controlled competitors simply aren't aggressive enough to cause you any major problems, and before long, you're sitting pretty at the summit of New York's rich list.

Fortunately, there's enough substance and sheen here to paper over the cracks. For starters, the city is immense, especially later on in the game when you're left juggling the needs of over 60,000 demanding citizens (all with their own unique names, desires, likes and dislikes). Hordes of people mill around the streets, travelling to work, heading out for lunch, strolling in the park then rushing home to get ready for a night on the town.

Zoom into the streets and you can watch people



GIVING THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT

Want to be the biggest cheese in the Big Apple? Here's how you do it



PARK LIFE: Upgrading New York is an exhaustive (if somewhat repetitive) process, with every new part of town needing substantial work. The parks, for example, usually start out as barren patches of grass.



ODE DEAR: Luckily, every so often, Opportunities will spring up to urge you to renovate certain parts of town. Here, an unemployed layabout, sorry, poet, wants a better-looking park so he can find his muse.



DO WHAT? After you've listened to the well-written and amusing dialogue – or rather, once you've read the instructions after the cut-scene – it's time to get to work. How about some trees and a swimming pool?



PRESS RELEASE: Here you go my hippy friend, a brand spanking new park for you to fritter away your life in. And I get rewarded with a nice little news report that raises my profile. Thank you, you're so kind.

Click on an individual and you can follow them around, like a stalker



NEW Yorkers tend to have terrible posture.

interacting with their surroundings (though these interactions aren't particularly detailed and not always that regular), and click on an individual and you can follow them around like some kind of voyeuristic stalker.

MY IT'S BIG

The sheer scope of *Tycoon City* sets it apart from many of its competitors and elevates it to heights that almost approach a Recommended award. Almost. Because the simple fact is that the game, despite its enormity, is just too damn simplistic, meaning that the fun factor begins to wane within a couple of days.

If you like building and beautifying then you'll be in your element here, but for everyone else, that's unlikely to be enough



to warrant an outlay of 35 British pounds. *Tycoon City: New York* may be big and colourful, but under its ostentatious, shiny surface and character-driven tasks, it's ultimately just another by-the-numbers tycoon game. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Vibrant and detailed
Sound Context-sensitive city sound effects
Multiplayer None

- ✓ Massive gaming world with tens of thousands of citizens
- ✓ Quality character-driven objectives
- ✓ Fun for the tycoon novice
- ✓ Amusing parades and carnivals to enjoy
- ✗ Much too easy for veteran gamers
- ✗ Very repetitive

70

Juicy on the outside, mushy on the inside

THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE GALAXY IS IN YOUR HANDS

THE FLEETS

Do you quickly build a fleet of TIE fighters and swarm the enemy before they gain strength? Or take time and build a more powerful fleet of Star Destroyers?

THE ELEMENTS

Do you wait until after the ice storm and lose the element of surprise? Or do you take advantage of low visibility and attack when they least expect it?

THE ARMIES

Do you crush bases under the feet of AT-ATs and risk losing a few? Or do you call down ships from space and bomb them back to the Stone Age?



Will you repeat *Star Wars*® history or change it forever? Play *Star Wars: Empire at War* and test your strategic mettle in an epic fight to control the entire *Star Wars* galaxy. As the Ultimate Galactic Commander, jump right into battle without wasting time on tedious resource gathering. Lead the Rebel Alliance in a quest to overthrow the Empire. Or choose the dark side, and use Darth Vader and the Death Star to crush the Rebellion. Either way, every soldier, battalion and fleet are yours to control. Make *Star Wars* history. Get your copy today. www.empireatwar.com



Game experience may change during online play.

PC
DVD
ROM



POWERED BY
gamespy



LUCASARTS

GALAXY IS IN YOUR HANDS. READY?

THE WEAPON

Do you protect the Death Star and reveal it at a critical moment? Or do you break out your big gun first and use Rebel planets for target practice?

THE CREATURES

Do you attack head-on and risk massive casualties? Or flank the enemy, circle around and hope any rancors you meet along the way aren't hungry?

THE TROOPS

Do you use guerilla tactics, conserve resources and slowly pick off enemy forces? Or do you go for broke and overwhelm the enemy with a sea of troops?

STAR WARS EMPIRE AT WAR





GENE TROOPERS

Andy Robinson goes under the microscope

DEVELOPER Cauldron
PUBLISHER Playlogic
WEBSITE
www.playlogicgames.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99

AT A GLANCE...

First-person shooter with RPG story and skill elements. As the only free-willed human gene trooper, you must save Earth from its alien conquerors and find your missing daughter.

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

HALF-LIFE 2 97%

SWAT 4 86%

GENE TROOPERS 59%



IN MANY WAYS, *Gene Troopers* is a lot like communism. I'm sure it has good intentions, but you have to face the cold hard truth that it just doesn't work. All the Havok physics and paint-by-numbers vehicle sections in the world couldn't save *Gene Troopers* from its bitter fate at the bottom of a retail bargain bin.

That's not to say that the basic premise isn't fine though. Earth has become a giant alien experimental laboratory, and as the only non-enforced human, you not only have to work out what's going on, but rescue your daughter into the bargain.

The few original features sound great on paper. *Gene Troopers* takes the traditional FPS formula and splices it with core RPG elements like skill points and multiple story arcs. In theory, you should be having lots of strategic fun upgrading your health points and purchasing all sorts of amazing slow-motion powers, but due to poor integration, you soon find it's much simpler to pretend that the skill points aren't even there and just have old-fashioned fun shooting things.

I say fun, but what I actually mean is 'moderate amusement'. *Gene Troopers* is far too by-the-numbers to entertain,

especially if you've played the likes of *Far Cry* or *Half-Life 2* for any length of time. The weapons are essentially all the same with different models, the enemies just stand around getting shot and the breast physics on the female characters are incredibly inaccurate (so we're told).

BAD SCIENCE

This is the sort of game in which you'd expect to find invisible walls, and, yes, you've guessed it, they're scattered liberally around the levels. *Gene Troopers* vainly attempts to include all the standard features you'd expect from a modern-day shooter, but where the game fails is in its complete lack of compelling new ideas. Shoot out the security cameras? Take out the snipers? Those enemies are standing next to an explosive barrel? It all feels like a Sunday afternoon re-run of the shooters you've been playing for the last ten years. **PCZ**



PCZONE

Graphics Moderately bright and colourful
Sound Excellent soundtrack but a lack of environmental effects
Multiplayer By-the-numbers deathmatching

- ✓ Multiple story choices create variety
- ✓ Excellent soundtrack
- ✓ Bouncy breast physics
- ✗ Awful enemy AI
- ✗ Weapons all feel the same

59
Genetically shodified



LULA 3D

"We're going to need a bigger Hill," asserts *Will Porter* as he weighs up *Lula's* assets

DEVELOPER CDV
PUBLISHER CDV
WEBSITE www.lula.de
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99



AT A GLANCE...

Imagine the most cringe-worthy adventure game you can conceive, then mistranslate it and add shagging mannequins. Great!

System requirements 2

HOW IT STACKS

SEX WITH A BEAUTIFUL LADY 90%

SEX WITH A CLOD OF EARTH 61%

PLAYING LULA 3D 31%

THERE'S SOMETHING oddly compelling about *Lula 3D*. It harnesses your attention in the same way that all ten minutes of Michelle from *Big Brother* decked out in cheap purple underwear staring slack-jawed into the camera on the midnight freeview on Television X might do. It's crap, it's wrong, it's as sexy as placing a dead fish in your mouth and slowly pulling it in and out so the scales get stuck between your teeth – but it's still better than watching *World's Wildest Police Chases* with Sheriff John Bunnell.

I mean, this is a game that gives you options like 'observe showering lesbians', it has perpetually shagging automatons on every other street corner, along with the most inept voice-acting and English translation that you can humanly imagine ("You want some trouble with my father's son?"). It's Joseph Conrad's 'fascination with the abomination' in videogame form: where will you put the vibrator next? What are you going to do with the 'breast-tingling vodka' you've just picked up? Did a development company really ask the *Lula* voice-actress to piss,

fart and then giggle at her naughtiness when you command her to go to the toilet? Just how low is this game going to go – and how abysmal will it be when they do it?

BIG 'N' BOUNCY

Unsurprisingly, game controls are awful, puzzles inane and progress governed by doors that magically unlock themselves after you've spoken to everyone who's lounging around town about life as a hooker or giving blowjobs. And as for the box-touted 'Breast Bounce technology' – if *Lula's* bright pink assets bounce realistically, then I've clearly been talking to the wrong kind of girls for the entirety of my life. (Or at least the more recent bits of my life, in which I've been talking to girls.)

And yet I play it simply to see what, or who, is coming round the next corner. The game is just so inexorably, mind-bogglingly ignorant of how either real games or real sex works that it spread-eagles itself a fair way into the 'so-bad-it's-good' category. This isn't a victory

for the game though: it's a sad indictment of my moral character and my ongoing fascination with the truly, woefully inept. As lovely as it must be to live in *Lula*-land, with its never-ending intercourse and women who won't talk about anything other than dildos, I still think that I prefer having sex with real people. It's a strange hang-up of mine – I'm sure I'll get over it. **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Ageing, plastic, unrealistic pubes
Sound Worst script translation ever?
Multiplayer Fnar! Fnar!

- ✓ Remarkably bad
- ✓ Women in the nip!
- ✓ Lets us use Steve Hill's head again
- ✗ An abortion of a game
- ✗ Terrible gameplay, controls and puzzles
- ✗ Hates all woman-kind

31
It has its knockers





TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

Suzy Wallace discovers that the best-stocked garages are open 24 hours

DEVELOPER Codemasters
PUBLISHER Codemasters
WEBSITE
www.codemasters.co.uk
ETA February 24
PRICE £29.99



AT A GLANCE...

Be Jeremy Clarkson and motor through the World Tour mode or specialise in your favourite racing discipline in Codemasters' mammoth collection of motorsports. Brrrrm, brrrrm...

System requirements

3

HOW IT STACKS

GTR 90%

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2 89%

TOCA RACE DRIVER 3 85%

JUST LIKE THE never-ending war in the *ZONE* office over which flavour of Space Raiders reigns supreme, there's a massive divide in the world of driving games. On one side you have the arcade racers: these high-octane games aren't too smart but they're all about fun. They've watched *The Fast And The Furious* far too many times to give a toss about the laws of physics or even the performance of real cars. They didn't even notice that someone's engine failing because a bit of their car's body fell off doesn't make any sense, and they insist on every car in the world being fitted with enough nitrous to make your eyes bleed because their focus is solely on enjoyment.

Then on the other side you have the hardcore driving sims: these are the ones who look down their nose at you in disgust should you fail to know the difference between a camshaft and camber. Obsessed with recreating the real-world experience of driving, these guys couldn't care less if they're not accessible to everybody; after all, they're the closest thing you're ever likely to get to driving some of the world's finest automobiles. Only rarely does a game stumble into the no-man's-land between the two. But now, *TOCA Race Driver 3*'s done just that, and we're here to see if it can survive in this war of the machines.

CAREERS WORKSHOP

First things first, let's get to grips with the mechanics underneath. *TRD3* features three modes: World Tour, Pro Career and

Simulation. In World Tour, you make your way to the top of the racing pile by progressing through tiers, each of which offers a selection of motorsports to pick from. This is basically a rehash of *TRD2*'s Career mode without the storyline, but it has been improved with a larger selection of choices at each tier, meaning that your chances of getting lumbered with truck racing have been greatly reduced.

Pro Career's a new mode that offers the chance to specialise in a particular branch of motorsport, from open-wheel to off-road. Each discipline requires you to win a championship of around ten races in each vehicle (starting with the least powerful), before progressing to the next level. You can also purchase upgrades in this mode,

although thankfully they're limited to tuning products rather than letting you add Kenwood stickers to the rear window. In contrast to World Tour, Pro Career allows more time to get acquainted with a certain style of driving and therefore improve your skills in that discipline, and thus will appeal much more to serious driving fans. Rounding out the selection is Simulation mode which simply offers free rides and time-trials with tracks and cars that have been unlocked in the other modes.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Although the addition of Pro Career mode should extend the life of the game way beyond that offered by *TRD2*, the modes aren't the main focus.





WHO says size doesn't matter?



Slick Rick

The stropo Scot returns...



"AND this is what we call a door..."

Although purists will probably throw their spanners at the mag in disgust, we have to admit to being quite partial to the story mode featured in *TRD2*. Not only was witnessing Rick's blood pressure soar an added incentive to finish a race, but it also gave a quick time-out from driving and we were a bit sad to see it disappear in this version. Instead, the cut-scenes this time around merely relate to the racing events you've just achieved, such as qualifying on pole position or pissing off your opponents, with Rick making an appearance every now and then. However, rather than just venting his anger at you or getting exasperated at the intervention of various females, he does actually have something worth saying this time. In the cut-scenes between races, he often gives you the lowdown on the next car you'll be racing, introducing its strengths and weaknesses and giving hints on the best way to drive it. Of course, he's also there to cheer you on from the pit as well, pointing out any damage and generally subjecting you to the kind of nagging only a whinging wife can match. Wonder if he can cook...



Only rarely does a game fall between arcade racer and hardcore driving sim. *TOCA Race Driver 3* is just such a game



Wacky Racers

We explore the realms of the slightly unhinged world of niche motorsports

WHEELIE good.



We wholeheartedly applaud Codemasters' efforts – the variety of motorsport it's managed to cram onto one little disc is astounding, but there's some decidedly strange inclusions too. I mean, lawnmower racing? Yes, you can take your very own Honda-powered grass-cutter out for a spin. Feeling decidedly more 'motorised wheelchair' than burbling bastion of four-wheeled power, these were definitely added more for novelty value than in the interests of real racing (they don't even cut the grass!). Monster trucks also make an appearance, and while these things might be fun to watch crushing cars while piloted by surly American red-necks, they're a complete handful to race, with front wheels that pull off the ground under acceleration, resulting in some spectacular wheelies but not much forward motion. Super Trucks have also returned although frankly, the less said about them, the better.

Feeling inspired by some of Codemasters' quirky selections, we had a look about to find out just what peculiarities might be included in the next version. A quick search of the Internet revealed that Codies has barely scratched the surface, with such oddities as caravan-pulling, swamp buggy racing, golf cart racing and tractor racing all yielding results. Bung this lot together, throw in Dastardly, Muttley and Penelope Pitstop as main characters and we reckon it'll be a massive hit. Or maybe we should just stick to writing...

No, as every fan knows, *TOCA's* strength lies in offering enough motorsport to humble both the Goodwood Festival Of Speed and *Top Gear* rolled into one. The number of different racing genres has more than doubled, and while there are a few dud newcomers (see 'Wacky Racers', left), most of the additions are real gems, for example, the legendary Group B rally cars. In their debut appearance, these flame-spitting monsters' combination of tyre-shredding power and serious sliding make for some fantastic driving over the varied terrain of the UK rally stages.

Other brilliant additions include the sexy rides in the GT series, the gorgeous but frail

It's easier to win with a complete car, rather than one with two tyres missing

Mercedes Silver Arrows from the 1930s, the infamous BMW Williams F1 car, along with some down-and-dirty Baja Beetles.

DRIVE HARD

Codemasters has done a magnificent job of making each separate vehicle handle convincingly different, from the steady acceleration and understeer of a Honda Civic to the wheel-spinning power and manic oversteer of a Mosler. Just managing to

shoehorn all of the different driving styles in is a massive achievement, and with a driving model that's relatively easy to get to grips with, it's accessible to everyone.

However, hardcore drivers are likely to be disappointed when they plug in their

"I can see the pub from here."



setting and the new race rules, flags and practice and qualifying laps, which add a massive dose of realism to the title. However, if it's simple 'get in and go' racing you're after, you'll find yourself nicely catered for too.

YOUR TYPE?

Visually, we just can't help but feel that despite some new tweaks such as bump-mapping, the engine could do with some serious sparkle to back up the variety on offer. While everything looks perfectly accurate, the cars have a tendency to look dull and flat, instead of the shiny, reflective surfaces we expect. That said, the tracks are all modelled well, and if you're after a real visual treat, head for the UK rally stages with their spectacular winding tracks through gorgeously-modelled trees, narrow country lanes overlooked by the local wildlife and imposing grand manors.



The AI's impressive too, with cars both ahead and behind you falling prone to mistakes and spinning spectacularly off the track. Sometimes the annoying tendency of opponent drivers to aggressively stick to the racing line still crops up though, meaning that if you plan to take that perfect line, you run the risk of getting a little too friendly with the side panels of your opposition.

radiator, leading to cooling problems and perhaps even allowing your engine to overheat. Normally a cheater's paradise, driving off the track will now make debris cling to your tyres, reducing their grip.

These detrimental effects ultimately serve to improve your driving skills, as you discover it's easier to win with a complete car rather than one that has steam pouring from the bonnet and is missing a couple of tyres. However, choose to still use the car in front's rear bumper as a way of saving on your brake pads and your return to the pit lane will be greeted with some less than happy opponents in the cut-scenes.

By straddling the thin line between arcade racer and driving sim, *TOCA Race Driver 3* runs the risk of alienating both ends of the spectrum. Indeed, hardcore fans will probably prefer the full-on petrol-head's dream that is *GTR*, while arcade fans may be

happier with something that takes itself a less seriously, such as *NFS: Most Wanted*.

That said, if you're a fan of any kind of motorsport at all, you do need to grab yourself a copy of *TRD3*. Let's face it, thanks to Codemasters spectacularly managing to squeeze an entire sporting genre onto one DVD, as well as the ability to take your skills online should you finish the mass of races on offer, there's some serious miles to rack up before tiring this game out. In fact, given the mass of content, it could be the only driving title you'll need for the entire year. **PCZ**



PCZONE

Graphics	Details correct and present but lacking a bit of sparkle
Sound	Great sound effects sampled from the real deal
Multplayer	Single races or championships online

- ✓ Fantastic damage engine
- ✓ Unbelievable amounts of motorsport
- ✓ New Pro Career mode allows specialisation
- ✗ Graphics could be improved
- ✗ Force feedback is poor
- ✗ Not hardcore enough for some and too much for others

85
Top Gear

STUBBS THE ZOMBIE IN REBEL WITHOUT A PULSE

Will Porter finally plays the game he's been excited about for two years. Tragedy ensues...



DEVELOPER Wideload Games
PUBLISHER Aspyr/THQ
WEBSITE
www.stubbsthezombie.com
ETA February 10
PRICE £29.99

AT A GLANCE...

Third-person tomfoolery that makes you, yes you, the zombie. The brains start off sweet and juicy, but soon you'll be begging for change to your diet.

System requirements

2

HOW IT STACKS

HAVING YOUR BRAINS EATEN 98%

STUBBS THE ZOMBIE 62%

2% HAVING YOUR BRAINS EATEN

A **GAME THAT** makes you the zombie. A game with a wonderful comic spin and a '50s veneer. A game in which pedestrians scream, "He's eating, he's eating my brains!" and, "Now I'll never go to college!" A game in which you can rip off your hand and have it scutter Thing-like through the level. *Stubbs* looked like a dead-cert, a winner, a supreme reason for living. "Could it be magic?" we asked ourselves, with a collective shimmy of the hips. Could this really be *the* zombie game?

No, unfortunately not. It's a broken game whose conceit far, far outweighs the consistency of both level design and action. All together: "Oh, tits." Bit louder? "Oh, tits." Thank you. Let's see what went wrong.

POST-MORTEM

Despite its faults, *Stubbs The Zombie* (the man and the game) is inherently lovable. In terms of pitch, angle and consistency of rib-tickling, the chaps at Wideload, an offshoot of Bungie no less, have got it bang-on.

Stubbs sees you jumping up from the dead in the city of Punchbowl, a self-automated 'world of tomorrow' affair with chunky 'Robbie the Robot' robots, hover-cars and other faux-future paraphernalia so beloved by the gullible dolts of the American '50s. The on-screen action is even complemented by a flickery filter that presents the murderous rampage of the titular zombie with dust-specks, dampened colours and the occasional stray pube. Behind this, robots cheerfully fill up cars via their groinal attachments, citizens trot around

WHO'D BE A SCIENTIST?

Biologists, physicists, chemistry-ists, you name it, they always get a nasty end - whether you're in a *Half-Life*, a *Doom*, a *Far Cry* or even a *Stubbs The Zombie*...



BEHIND YOU: A-ha! A scientist! No doubt up to some evil, or perhaps simply going about his day-to-day job maintaining the Punchbowl dam and wondering what he's going to have for his tea.



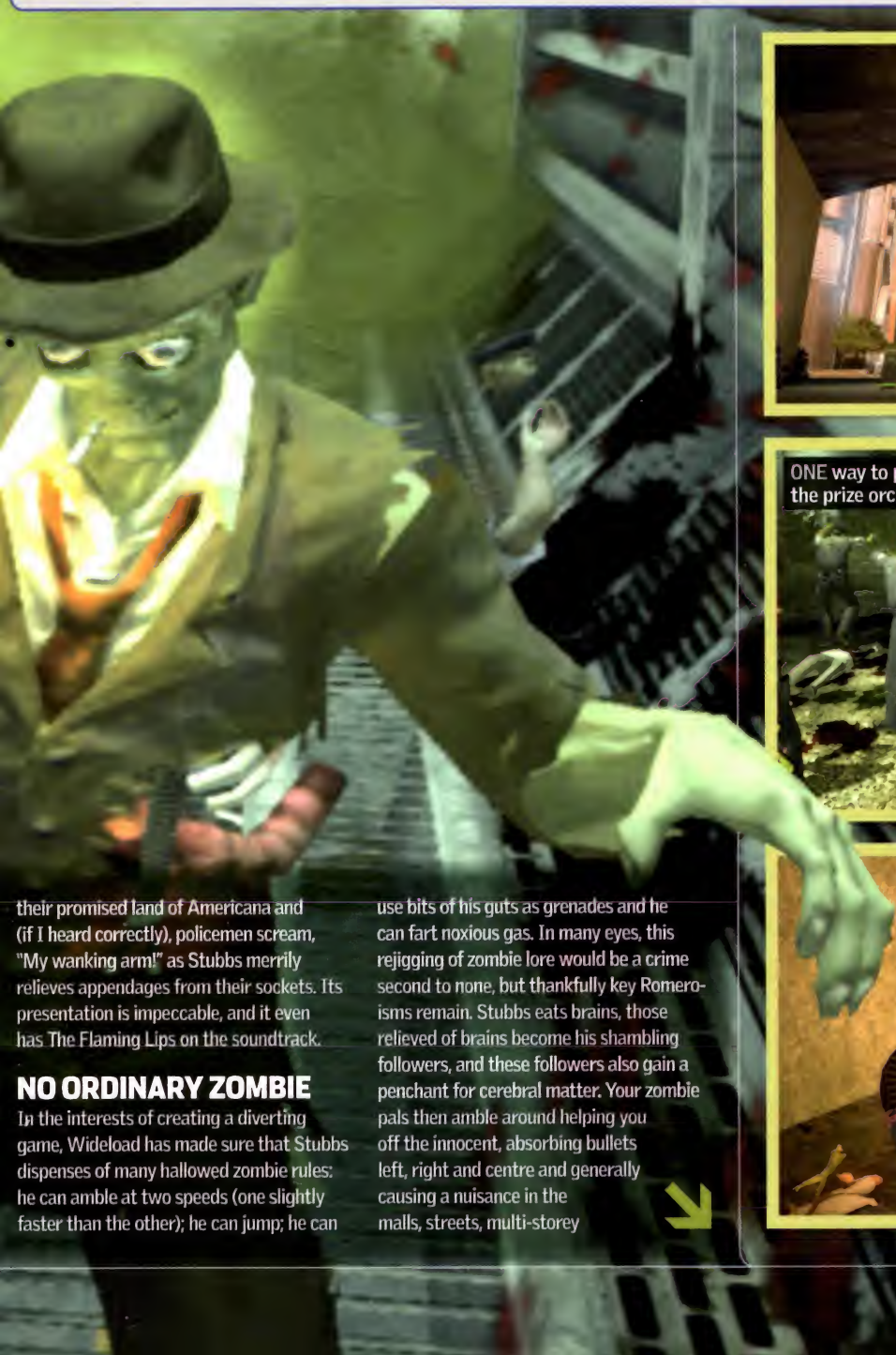
IN FRONT OF YOU: So what will it be? A few slaps and a nibble on the frontal lobe? A fart in his general direction? Scientists always get messy deaths these days, so I'll have to be creative.



LAW BREAKER: Christ on a bike! They armed the scientists? That's just not on, not on at all. Breaking zombie rules is one thing, but having a scientist that can fight back? The *Daily Mail* will be on this in a flash.



BALANCE RESTORED: In the end, I just pounded him until he fell into two bits. In a case like this I'd normally call the emergency services, but I'd imagine Health & Safety are quite hot on stuff like this in Punchbowl.



AH, Punchbowl. Home of people with brains.



ONE way to protect the prize orchids.



THE tutorial 'Guide Bot' bits are the best in the game.

their promised land of Americana and (if I heard correctly), policemen scream, "My wanking arm!" as Stubbs merrily relieves appendages from their sockets. Its presentation is impeccable, and it even has *The Flaming Lips* on the soundtrack.

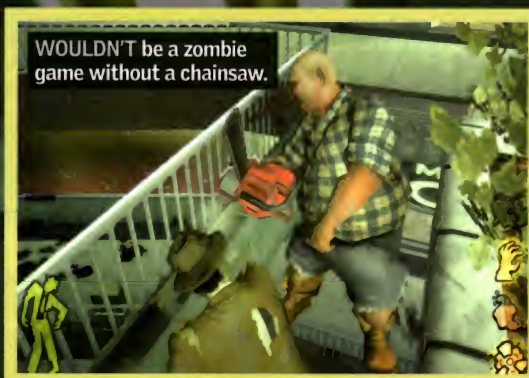
NO ORDINARY ZOMBIE

In the interests of creating a diverting game, Wideload has made sure that Stubbs dispenses of many hallowed zombie rules: he can amble at two speeds (one slightly faster than the other); he can jump; he can

use bits of his guts as grenades and he can fart noxious gas. In many eyes, this rejigging of zombie lore would be a crime second to none, but thankfully key Romeroisms remain. Stubbs eats brains, those relieved of brains become his shambling followers, and these followers also gain a penchant for cerebral matter. Your zombie pals then amble around helping you off the innocent, absorbing bullets left, right and centre and generally causing a nuisance in the malls, streets, multi-storey



THE robot and the car love each other very much. OK?



WOULDN'T be a zombie game without a chainsaw.



FRESH victims for the ever-growing army of the undead.

car parks, police stations and bumpkin environs of fair Punchbowl.

LOVELY BRAINS

You generally don't want your followers to be too greedy though, since chowing down on brain matter charges up your gut grenades and associated abilities, which unlock themselves as you stomp through the game. A particular highlight comes when you detach your own arm and control it skittering through the level, up walls and across ceilings, until you come across an armed man ripe for possession. Then, with questioning voices piping up around saying that you're "looking a bit different", or perhaps wearing a new shirt (with a green forearm attached to the rear of your chosen innocent's head), you can unholster his weapon, run into a room packed with his friends and colleagues and bag yourself some headshot decapitations.

On the surface at least, everything appears well and good: it's gory, it's funny, its undead tongue is lolling out of a hole in its cheek. But the game mechanics simply do not work in any way, shape or sinister form. You can fill a game up with enough great tunes and neat gags to raise an instant smile, but if the rubric of being a zombie isn't fun, then where's the point? Combat is a button-tapping mess followed by rudimentary noggin-gobbling, the guns of the possessed are diabolical and your horde of zombie-followers are useless when the action gets going.

If this game had lived up to its ambitions, you could have had some sort of tactics in mind – creating shambling pincer movements with your followers perhaps – but as it is, everything feels loose and irrelevant. Offing your foes too often becomes simply

wandering towards an insurgent and taking their bullets one after the other, eating their brain and then standing behind a shed until you automatically regenerate. This isn't fun. It's like *Wideload* is somehow expecting you to use your skills in some way to get through it in a slicker way – but you're bugged if you know how.

YAWN OF THE DEAD

It doesn't help that your zombie powers are so few and far between either. Your poisonous farts are useless, while the limited availability of gut grenades and head-bowling ball-bombs, coupled with their complete inaccuracy, makes lightweight nonsense out of some wonderfully-crafted animations of cartoon violence. Vacant level design, meanwhile, has large areas populated by relatively few characters – despite the sizeable amount of zombies that may be futilely trailing in your wake. My biggest bugbear in gaming meanwhile, the 'Halo effect', in which the same interiors are repeated ad infinitum, also makes a return to the fray.

In essence, the game mechanics are as rough as a butcher's dog, yet it remains a game that will make you smile, and one that you'll finish – not least because it's so damn short. With the best soundtrack in history (Ben Kweller, Cake, Death Cab For Cutie, The Dandy Warhols, The Flaming Lips et al), and enough dainty '50s lip-gloss applied, despite its cavalcade of issues, there are reasons to play it – but very few reasons to part with your hard-earned cash for it. Certainly not on PC either – *Stubbs* loves the console, and loves it hard.

And with that, the last great hope for zombie gaming is snuffed out. But you know zombies – they'll be back for more. One day. One day soon... **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Not great, but lovely animation
Sound Amusing sounds, great music
Multiplayer Nope

- ✓ Excellent concept
- ✓ Great atmosphere of '50s faux-future
- ✗ Action doesn't live up to potential
- ✗ Dull level design
- ✗ We wanted this to be great

62

Must... Eat... Drains...

WALK like an Egyptian. Or a zombie being an Egyptian.



A train? What can it mean?



BUT more importantly, where's her bra?

It seems so close, as if I could almost jump across, and leave this island behind me

MY mum's got a carpet like that.



AGATHA CHRISTIE: AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

And then there was fun? *Paul Presley* begs to disagree

DEVELOPER AWE Games
PUBLISHER The Adventure Company
WEBSITE www.agathachristiegame.com
ETA Out now
PRICE £19.99



LET'S look through the keyhole...

AT A GLANCE...

Ten little politically-correct somethings are bumped off one by one. You get to watch it happen while getting frustrated at the interface, in a nutshell.

System requirements 2
HOW IT STACKS
FAHRENHEIT 90%
ANKH 68%
AC:ATTWN 31%

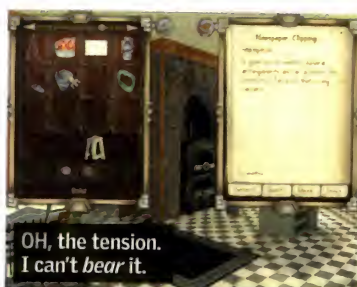
WELL, THERE'S NOTHING wrong with the premise I suppose. Take one of the most celebrated murder-mystery novels of all time, add an extra character (the player), then play out the intricate twists and turns according to Mrs Christie's superb criminal logic. Just for extra spice, in case you've actually read the book/seen the film, multiple endings have been added to keep you on your toes.

The only problem is that as a game, it's ridiculously unwieldy and clunky, both in interface and interaction terms. From the player's point of view, there's really not much for you to actually work out, other than a few cursory object manipulation puzzles. This is because the story's events don't change much and are going to be carried out regardless of what action you

try to take. No murder can be prevented for instance, as that would disrupt the overall story, and the way the game stops you from interfering in the plot is poorly done. For instance, you can't pick up an axe in a garden shed (one of the yet-to-be-used murder weapons), as you're told that you'd be thought insane to be walking around with an axe. However, that doesn't stop you walking around with a giant stepladder, a garden hose, a shovel, half-a-dozen drinking glasses, a gramophone record, silk sheets, a large basket of apples, a stone cheese wheel, etc, etc...

CRIMINAL ACTS

If the internal logic isn't enough to dissuade you, then the game's interface most definitely will. One item on a table can't be picked up as the player's character informs you: "I'm no packrat." Except he then proceeds to pick up half a dozen other objects without pause for thought. The movement paths are tortuous, as are conversational scripts. Text can't be skipped, which may be fine for a dramatic piece of dialogue, but is eminently frustrating when you're having to wait for your character to lengthily tell you that you can't do something for the umpteenth-millionth time.



OH, the tension. I can't bear it.

And Then There Were None is basically a shocking game that entirely wastes its subject matter. Unfortunately, The Adventure Company has signed a further three or four Christie novels to corrupt in this manner. And you wonder why kids don't read books any more... **PCZ**

PCZONE

Graphics Ugly character models, but nice scenery
Sound Repetitive music and woeful voice-acting
Multiplayer And then there were none

- ✓ At least it's proper literature
- ✗ Awful, clunky interface and controls
- ✗ Horrible voice-acting and dialogue implementation
- ✗ Broken animations and lacklustre models
- ✗ Unpolished

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It's moidah

You won't find any of these indie games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our discs.

indiezone



Come ye, come ye and see the latest efforts to grace the indie gaming world. *Martin Korda* is your guide



EACH weapon has two firing modes.

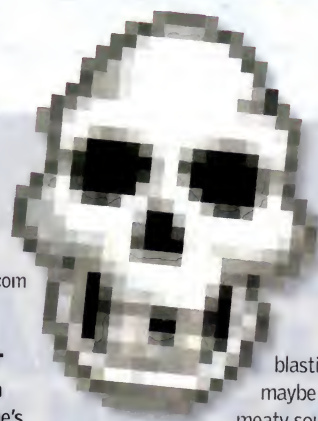


SHIELD upgrades give you a few seconds to kill some nasties.

**INDIEZONE
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**

R.I.P.

DEVELOPER White Elephant
WEBSITE www.elephant-games.com
PRICE \$1995 (£11.41)



SIMPLISTIC, BUT FUN.

That's *R.I.P.* in a nutshell. The game's basic premise is to control a rotating, mouse-controlled turret, operated by one of three different characters – Death, Rock'n'Roll and Halloween – who must repel an ever-increasing amount of enemies with an assortment of weapons. Ingenious so far, no?

Despite *R.I.P.*'s almost patronising simplicity, there's something about it that's utterly irresistible. Perhaps it's that you can level-up your character (each is unique), or the cleverly constructed and upgrade-rammed levels that reward tactics and accurate shooting over mindless

blasting. Or maybe it's the meaty sound effects and heart-racing soundtrack.

Whatever it is, *R.I.P.* is one of those games that you simply can't stop playing once you've started, though with many levels being under two minutes in duration, and with only 40 of them in total, the experience is more short-lived than a virgin's first romp.

At this price, you're probably better off just enjoying the 30-minute demo, but if it ever drops to half the price, then the temptation to pay up might just prove too strong to resist.

**PCZONE
58**



FIRE at a grenade and watch those suckers burn.



IT really isn't rocket science.

WONDERLINES

DEV Nevosoft WEBSITE www.nevosoft.com PRICE \$1995 (£11.41)

NOT QUITE AS awe-inspiring as the title may suggest, *Wonderlines* is a simple, yet tepidly addictive colour-matching puzzle game that'll stretch your perspicacity to the same heady heights as *The Sun* crossword. Yes, it's that taxing – but on the plus side, its slow-paced and rewarding gameplay will at least help you unwind you after a day of hardcore gaming.

Beautifully presented and featuring the kind of tinkly soundtrack that's usually reserved for hippy shops, there's little to fault in the presentation stakes. The main problem lies with

the gameplay – considered by some to be fairly important – which soon begins to wane, despite a smattering of bonuses that are injected into the mix to add some much-needed variety.

The fact is, you really wouldn't want to pay this much for something that's ultimately little more than a distraction, and you'll probably find you've had your fill from the demo alone anyway. So our advice is play that, and then go out and buy something less boring instead.

**PCZONE
47**

ARCTIC QUEST

DEVELOPER Alawar Games WEB www.alawar.com PRICE \$19.95 (£11.41)

THE SNOW KING has unleashed a bitter frost across Earth's tropical islands, and it's up to you to thaw them out. We're not sure about you, but we're gripped already.

But wait, it gets even more exciting, as beneath this most tacked-on of storylines, you'll find an unbelievably dull puzzle game that tasks you with catching falling pieces of ice of differing shapes and fitting them into a grid that's... Wait for it... In the shape of an animal.

Only when you've completed 60 of these puzzles can you break the evil Snow King's spell. Yes, it really is as unexciting as it sounds.

As *Tetris* rip-offs go, it's certainly one of the weaker efforts, and you'll be lucky if you're still playing beyond level six, as the gameplay is utterly laborious and bereft of immediacy. Frankly, it's about as much fun as sticking snowballs down your pants.

PCZONE
30



MAKING a cup of tea shouldn't be this complex.



SAMOROST 2

DEVELOPER Amanita Design WEB www.samorost2.net PRICE \$9.90 (£5.59)

IF YOU think that Sudoku is a little too much like maths homework for comfort, or if you just prefer your puzzles to be a little more aesthetically pleasing, *Samorost 2* could be the game for you.

This Flash-based puzzler is a delightful, if very basic, way to spend a few brain-teasing hours of your life, as you embark on an intergalactic mission to save your kidnapped dog from aliens. "Heel Rover. Oh bugger," etc...

Bereft of inventories or branching dialogue trees, *Samorost* is point-and-click gaming at its purest, with each new environment containing several linked puzzles that must be solved before you can progress. And while its minimalist approach may not be to

everyone's liking, *Samorost* does have a certain bamboozling charm that keeps you coming back for more.

The first chapter is free; then, if you like what you see, you can download the second one to your hard drive for under six quid. A snip.

PCZONE
54



Developer Q&A



MARK CURRIE
CO-FOUNDER, LEAD DEVELOPER
COMPANY Inhuman Games
WEBSITE www.inhumangames.com
GAMES *Trash*

PCZ Tell us a bit about your company?

MARK We're basically two people: one programmer and one artist.

PCZ So, what's the deal with your debut game, *Trash*?

MARK We were inspired by *StarCraft*, *C&C* and the desire to push the RTS genre. The game has evolved over many rounds of feedback from the players.

PCZ What's your ethos towards making indie games?

MARK Focus on gameplay and being unique and listen to your players.

PCZ Any good advice for budding indie game developers?

MARK It's harder than you think. Start with something very small.

PCZ What's the best thing about indie gaming?

MARK Freedom and productivity. Being indie means having full control over design. Working on a small team means you spend much less time talking to people and reading other people's source code.



BUDGET

He shops at Netto, so *Martin Korda* knows a bargain when he sees one

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

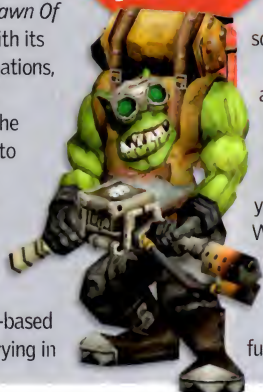
PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.focusmm.co.uk PRICE £9.99

HERE'S A REAL bargain if you're a *Command & Conquer*-style RTS fan, hankering for some good-looking, strategically un-taxing mayhem.

Aged 18 months, *Dawn Of War* is still a looker, with its superbly detailed animations, excellent dialogue and voice-acting bringing the *Warhammer* universe to life like never before.

The gameplay isn't quite so impressive, sticking to build and rush conventions, with only the territory-based resource gathering varying in

**BUDGET
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**



any major way from the *C&C* mechanics of yore. Still, the pacy action and some beautifully imagined units make the repetition all worth while, as does the plot, which morphs from tepid to scorching in the first few levels.

Dawn Of War is by no means a fan-boy game, and if you've never even heard of *Warhammer 40,000* – more than possible if you didn't fritter away your youth loitering around Games Workshop – you'll still find it more of a blast than a satchel full of TNT.

**PCZONE
81**



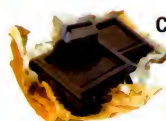
**THIS
MONTH
PCZONE
SAVED MONEY BY...**



Martin cutting down his meat costs by eating it straight off the cow.
Saving: Wear and tear on the meat grinder



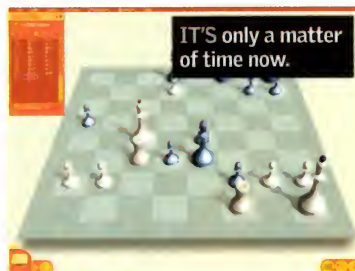
Jamie cutting down his Christmas costs by buying cheap presents.
Saving: Almost 200 pence



Clare buying half-priced chocolate in the Morrisons' sale.
Saving: £3

CHESSMASTER 10TH EDITION

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.focusmm.co.uk PRICE £9.99



OK, SO YOU may not be interested in buying the most definitive PC-based chess game ever made, even at this price, but if you are still reading this review (hello mum!), *Chessmaster 10th Edition* is a must-buy. I mean come on, ten quid – you can't say fairer than that.

What you get for your wonga are countless opponents, ranging from the borderline moronic to near-Grandmaster proficiency, a comprehensive series of tutorials, tens of thousands of recorded games to watch and learn from and 35 chess sets to play on, including some novelty animated ones for the kiddies to enjoy.

Granted, if you own *Chessmaster 9000* you'll probably struggle to

spot too many major improvements – hence the reason it hasn't scored even higher – but as chess games go, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more exhaustive and detailed simulation of the thinking man's game than this.

**PCZONE
80**



PRO RUGBY MANAGER

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.focusmm.co.uk PRICE £9.99



SAVE it for the showers, lads.

KICK it Jonny, kick it!

BACK IN 2003, the country was gripped by rugger fever as Jonny Wilkinson punted a last-gasp winner against the Aussies in the World Cup final. Inevitably, it wasn't long before we were flooded by a torrent

of games depicting the game so loved by toothless oafs and Cambridge undergraduates, one of which was *Pro Rugby Manager 2004*.

Now at a third of the price and with the date lopped off its title, *Pro Rugby Manager* proves no more accessible now than it was back then, despite a smattering of polishes.

The hardcore approach and often bewildering player stats mean that only the most ardent of rugby lovers are likely to understand what's going on. Plus, while the real-time action is fun to watch, the on-the-fly tactical changes you bark from the sidelines are rarely listened to or followed.

In fairness, the game's accuracy and attention to detail can't be faulted, but its lack of accessibility and clumsy tactical implementations mean it's impossible to recommend. Unless you like spending your Sunday afternoons with your head between another man's thighs.

PCZONE 58

THE SETTLERS: HERITAGE OF KINGS

PUBLISHER Focus Multimedia WEBSITE www.focusmm.co.uk PRICE £9.99

IT WAS SUPPOSED to be the game that brought micro-management to the mainstream, the game that was to break *The Settlers'* niche and introduce non-German gamers to the joys of building up settlements and looking after little people. It failed. Miserably.

The main problem with *Heritage Of Kings* is that in attempting to lure in a new audience while keeping the old one happy, it's single-handedly managed to ostracise both.

Watered-down management and a move to a more serious visual style – which kills the smidgeon of humour that was still left in this once amusing series – makes it by far the blandest and uninteresting *Settlers* game ever made. Add to this a painfully hackneyed storyline that unashamedly steals from Tolkien and you're left with a totally unimaginative bore of a game that fails to excel in any department.

The saddest thing is there's nothing seriously wrong with *HOK's* mix of resource gathering, man-management, warfare and task-based missions. It's just that it's all so bland, it's easy to lose consciousness just talking about it... Zzzz.

PCZONE 53



LOOK, a group of adventurers. One might even call it a Fellowship.

MANAGE the lives of little people while fighting the forces of evil.

PCZONE TOP 5 BUDGET BUYS



1 FAR CRY

£9.99, Mastertronic

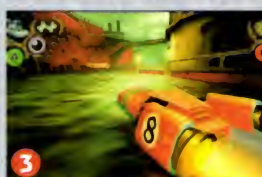
Better than *Half-Life 2*? So some say. The best non-gravity gun shooter of recent years anyway. An island paradise with extra explosions and terrific enemy AI.



2 X2: THE THREAT

£9.99, White Label

Begone *Freelancer*! The real space sim starts here – on budget anyway (*X3* is better yet but costs more). Freedom among the stars. Could life be better?



3 BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

£9.99, Focus Multimedia

Glorious story-telling, engaging gameplay and the greenest lips in all of gaming-dom make the ever-overlooked *BG&E* a must-buy. Deep, imaginative, brilliant.



4 SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII

£12.99, Codemasters

One of the finest strategy titles of recent years, *Soldiers* is a near-perfect blend of tactical thought, balls-out action and historical accuracy.



5 BLACK & WHITE

£4.99, Sold Out

Molyneux's opus split opinion on release, but at this price you can't fault its ambition and gameplay. Monkey slapping has never been so cheap.

+3 FREE GIFTS



ON SALE NOW!



YOUR SHOUT!

Speak your brains on the latest releases



X3: REUNION

OUR SCORE: 92%

I've been a subscriber for longer than I care to remember (several years at least), and a reader since the mid-'90s. In that time, I've purchased many games based solely on reviews in the mag and I've never really read a review and disagreed with it as strongly as I have with Prezzer's review of *X3: Reunion*.

For a start, it's buggy as hell and most people have frame-rate troubles, even on very fast machines. Then there's the many BBS missions that don't work, the crashes, the awful manual and lack of tutorial. Top that off with the impossible learning curve and you have a hideous proposition.

It seems obvious to me that this game has been rushed out for a Christmas release, and I feel that Mr Presley had too much of a vested interest in this game to be able to review it objectively. He's even admitted to practically being on their payroll: "Great voice-acting (mostly by me)." This review should have been performed by someone with less of an interest in the franchise, or at the very least, it should have had a second opinion by someone who had not played any of the *X* series before – then they would have suffered as I did.

Stephen Torcy: **64%**

YOU DO THE REVIEWS!

Agree? Disagree? Well, the world wouldn't be the wonderful place it was if we all thought the same way. If you fancy sharing your own thoughts with your fellow readers, then jot them down (we find the recent advancements in parchment and ink technology to be handy), trim the amount of words to a MAXIMUM of 100, add a score out of 100 then send them to the address below. If we think they're worthy of sharing, we'll print them here. Better yet, one of you each month will be awarded our coveted Review Of The Month award and showered with a gift of some description.

Send your reviews to: yourshout@pczone.co.uk, or stick them in an envelope and post them to: PC ZONE, Your Shout, Future, 1 Balcombe Street, London, NW1 6NA.



Review of the Month



QUAKE 4

OUR SCORE: 84%

Quake 4 lives by a simple formula. You take X, Y and Z: X is the player, Y is the gun and Z is the enemy. If $X+Y>Z$, then Z dies. If $X+Y<Z$, then X dies. With this simple formula, X starts up *Quake 4*, X is greeted by some fantastic graphics, and once the intro is done, some music and loud gunfire sounds. X starts with a Y and soon encounters some Zs. Behind the scenes, the computer goes through its formula and the Zs die. Soon enough though, the formula goes all wrong, don't ask how, it just does. X dies, Z reigns supreme, X says "WTF!?" as X enters a gory cut-scene. After some time, X emerges a new man, or Strogg I should say. Yes, X plays as a Strogg, but finds it's not all that really. Unless X thinks that having 125 health, a new HUD colour and font is 'all that'. Nothing really changes: in fact, all that's happened is that the game has made it so that $X+Y$ will never be smaller than Z again. So X shoots some more Zs and it's great fun. *Quake 4* isn't smart, but it is pretty and fun. Screw a good story and innovative gameplay: X is too tired to think, give X a big Y, huge Zs and leave X alone!

Paul Hoey: **90%**

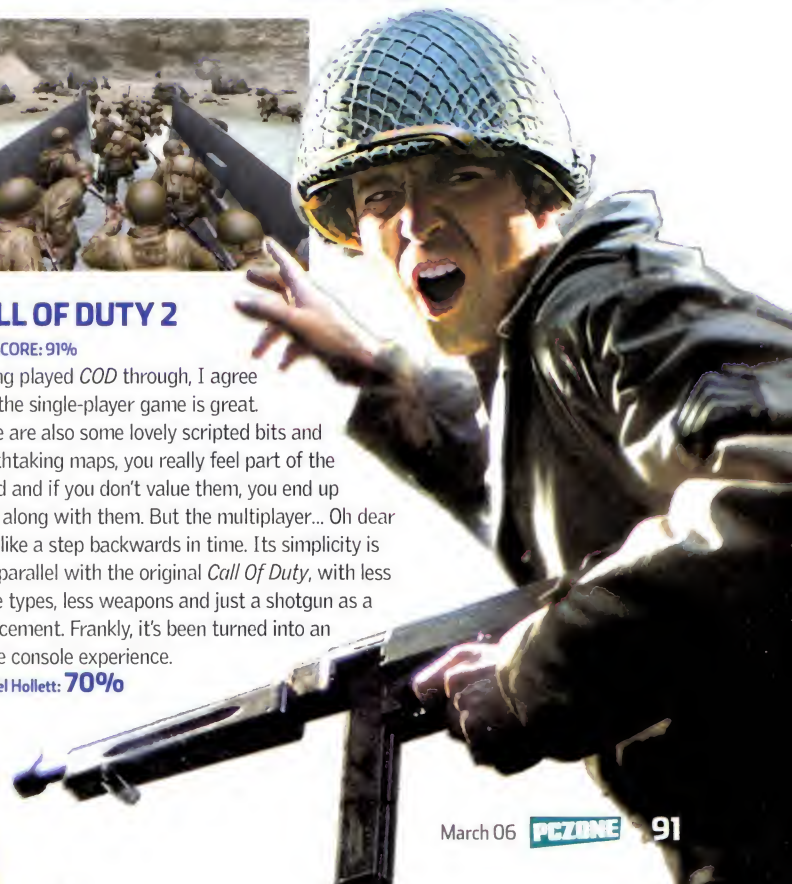


CALL OF DUTY 2

OUR SCORE: 91%

Having played *COD* through, I agree that the single-player game is great. There are also some lovely scripted bits and breathtaking maps, you really feel part of the squad and if you don't value them, you end up dead along with them. But the multiplayer... Oh dear – it's like a step backwards in time. Its simplicity is on a parallel with the original *Call Of Duty*, with less game types, less weapons and just a shotgun as a replacement. Frankly, it's been turned into an online console experience.

Michael Hollett: **70%**



BUYER'S GUIDE

The best games money can buy, all in one place



PCZONE TOP 5 PC GAMING COPS

- 1 SAM (NO, MAX)
- 2 MAX (NO, SAM)
- 3 MAX PAYNE
- 4 SONNY BONDS (POLICE QUEST)
- 5 THE SWAT 4 BOYS



PCZONE TOP 5 GAMES - PAUL PRESLEY

- 1 OPERATION FLASHPOINT
PCZ ISSUE: 104
- 2 THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
PCZ ISSUE: N/A
- 3 ULTIMA VII: THE SERPENT ISLE
PCZ ISSUE: 3
- 4 DAVID LEADBETTER'S GOLF
PCZ ISSUE: N/A
- 5 THE MOVIES
PCZ ISSUE: 162



PCZONE TOP 5 MOST WANTED 'TYCOON' GAMES

- 1 ALEHOUSE TYCOON
- 2 JAPANESE GAME IMPORT TYCOON
- 3 THE TYCOON'S TYCOON TYCOON
- 4 HABERDASHERY TYCOON
- 5 RACCOON TYCOON

Shooters

Must buy!



HALF-LIFE 2
PCZ Issue: 148 - 97%

Everyone knew this would be good, but no-one quite expected the tour de force that Valve managed to pull off. Easily a contender for the best game of all time, *Half-Life 2* is just one stunning set-piece after another, and is guaranteed to leave you dribbling with awe. Be warned though, a (fast) online connection is needed for Valve's mandatory Steam delivery service.



BATTLEFIELD 2
PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%

If it's online action you want, look no further. *BF2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the best graphics ever. Just make sure you have a ninja PC.



FAR CRY
PCZ Issue: 140 - 93%

In many eyes, Crytek's shooter outweighs even the mighty *Half-Life 2* in its tension, tactics and expansive level design. It's a mighty achievement with seemingly freeform action and the best sniping money can buy.



CALL OF DUTY 2
PCZ Issue: 162 - 91%

Brutal, relentless and totally gripping, the WWII shooter sequel packs more action into a single level than most pack into an entire game. Epic scale battles and intense drama. World War II at its unforgiving best.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004
PCZ Issue: 138 - 91%

UT2004 packs so much punch, you'd be hard pushed to find a flaw. Team games, deathmatches, tactical thinking in the Onslaught mode - everything the sci-fi shoot 'em up fan could want.



F.E.A.R.
PCZ Issue: 160 - 90%

With more shocks and scares than an episode of *Revenge of the Nerds* (and a much higher body count), *F.E.A.R.* pushes the shooter part of FPS to the limit. It might not be the scariest game ever, but it will make you jump.



SWAT 4
PCZ Issue: 154 - 86%

SWAT 4 is a tactical squad shooter that sings. Dark in places, brutal in others, it's the only shooter that allows you to tazer old ladies and drown them in pepper spray. Probably the best co-op experience around to boot.

Strategy

Must buy!



ROME: TOTAL WAR
PCZ Issue: 148 - 93%

Once upon a time, all strategy games were visual abortions and strictly for the hardcore (OK, a bit of a sweeping statement). But *Rome: Total War* changed all that, mixing breathtaking 3D with troop numbers reminiscent of a Hollywood epic, as well as staggering historical accuracy. The result is a masterpiece and a game just about anyone can enjoy. Hell, how many other titles are made into TV shows?



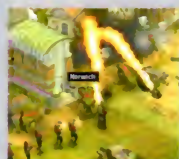
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH
PCZ Issue: 149 - 91%

Although the *LOTR* RTS doesn't hold a candle to the *Total War* franchise, there's nothing quite like ordering a Balrog around for guaranteed strategy fun.



SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II
PCZ Issue: 144 - 90%

The strategy of *Commandos* meets the fun of *Canon Fodder* in this top-down game of tactics. Being the underdog has never been so much fun, and the rumble of tanks never so worrying.



RISE OF NATIONS
PCZ Issue: 129 - 90%

One of the best of the 'last generation' of Empire builders, *Rise of Nations* - coupled with exemplary expansion pack *Thrones and Patriots* - is a uniquely satisfying and addictive treatment of the *Civ* genre.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!
PCZ Issue: 149 - 88%

If you've got some downtime at the close of the day, then *Pirates!* is the most relaxing (and swashbuckling) game around. Drifting around the Caribbean with a flotilla of ships and mischief on your mind is escapism at its finest.



GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS
PCZ Issue 143 - 84%

Despite a few AI glitches, *GCII* is a great game if you prefer tactics to boring old resource management. A superb sci-fi effort with some intense freeform missions. Strat-fans should check it out.



AGE OF EMPIRES III
PCZ Issue: 162 - 84%

A sprinkling of innovation and a barefaced lushness lets us give this a hearty endorsement, even though it doesn't stray far from the established formula. Still the best 'new world' game, and the best RTS cannons ever.

Action/Adventure

Must buy!



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%

The chosen poison for certain PCZ staffers after a long hard day, Payne's second outing is perhaps the most pixel-perfect example of joy-through-excessive-destruction on the market. Slicker than slick, breathtaking and quite beautiful, *Max Payne 2* provides the greatest gaming kicks that money can buy. It's extremely short, but so tense, well designed and replayable that you just won't care.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%

To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this - a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious - *San Andreas* is the summit of gaming achievement.



SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY
PCZ Issue 154 - 91%

A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercenaries multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



FAHRENHEIT
PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%

Murder most foul, with you as the killer. This twisting, turning, brilliantly-told plot features multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



PSYCHONAUTS
PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%

Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker - *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%

We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Illios is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES
PCZ Issue: 164 - 86%

The shirtless wonder finally makes it into the Buyer's Guide, not that any of his outings can be considered bad games. *TTT* manages to get all the ingredients just right this time.

MMOs



WORLD OF WARCRAFT

PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%
Blizzard's recreation of the classic strategy world in MMO form doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to look at, also bing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



EVERQUEST II

PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%
A *Star Trek* to *WOW*'s *Star Wars*, *EQII* gives the original a much needed lick of paint, a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A time-sink in the true, classic sense.



GUILD WARS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%
How to make a gaming genre accessible to the masses. It shines with polish, thought and lack of monthly subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home too, thanks to a totally skills-based set-up.



EVE ONLINE

PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%
Elite online has been a long-held fantasy and this space sim is the closest yet to making it a reality. Its slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining or trading to piracy - it's up to you.



CITY OF HEROES

PCZ Issue: 155 - 86%
Nothing beats the feeling of spandex and fire-beams shooting from your eyes. This super-powered MMO lets you live all those heroic dreams to the full. Nietzsche would have a field day.

Sport



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 5

PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
Football, football, football. Morning, noon and night. The beautiful game in a beautiful game. Not only the best version of *Pro Evo* ever, also the best footy game ever.



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006

PCZ Issue: 162 - 90%
One year on and the best footy management game is even better. Quick Tactics, half-time team talks, physio reports - changes are small but add up to a terrific whole.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%
Travel through time playing Tiger Woods throughout history. Only in an EA Sports game. *Tiger 06* is the best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



NHL 06

PCZ Issue: 160 - 84%
Ice hockey may not be the UK's number one sporting pastime, but that doesn't make EA Sports' incarnation of it any less fun. Exciting, breathless and violent balls-out fun for the whole family.



MADDEN 2005

PCZ Issue: 152 - 84%
Although the 2006 version is now upon us, this is actually the better option (at least until 2007 arrives). In truth, there's little to differ between the versions, but this one just feels more fluid.

Simulation



X3: REUNION

PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
Finally, a space sim to better *X2: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Plus, it plays well too.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES

PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%
While flight sims are becoming rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None more so than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

PCZ Issue: 133 - 89%
No, you don't shoot things, no there's no mission structure, yes there's the best non-combat flight experience to date. History can be fun.



FREELANCER

PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%
If *X2* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



FALCON 4.0

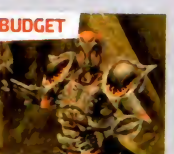
PCZ Issue: 158 - 82%
An example of fanbase enthusiasm saving a once-dead series, *Falcon 4.0* lives on thanks to the dedication of its hard-working players. The best modern-day fighter sim on the market.

RPGs



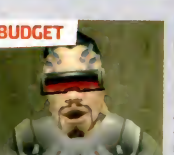
KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

PCZ Issue: 137 - 94%
KOTOR is the best *Star Wars* game of recent years. Moving, dramatic and fairly adult in tone, it also has a hefty dose of lightsabers to keep you happy.



THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%
Possibly the most intimidating, yet wonderful game we've played - the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



DEUS EX

PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%
This remains the benchmark in FPS RPGs. Twisting sci-fi plots, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama help retain *Deus Ex* as the alpha male of the gaming world.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

PCZ Issue: 118 - 91%
It may not have the depth of *Fallout*, but the customisation options in this are so extensive that it's been granted a very long life. Still a wonderfully immersive game.



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

PCZ Issue: 86 - 87%
Compelling storylines, great characterisation and a heart of pure darkness - *Planescape* is the best thing Interplay's Black Isle Studios ever gave us.

Driving/Racing



GT LEGENDS

PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends* does the business for historical driving. A natural successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, it's like the swinging '60s never ended.



GTR

PCZ Issue: 153 - 90%
As real as it gets. Probably. The complete driving solution on a PC, with all the drifting, shunting and racing you need. Invest in a decent force-feedback steering wheel and pedals set-up though.



LIVE FOR SPEED

PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%
Online racing at its best. Realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. On the right servers that is. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

PCZ Issue: 142 - 89%
The most comprehensive driving game on the PC, *TOCA 2* is a must-have if you're into motors. 15 different motorsports to master, 52 tracks and rival drivers with top AI smarts.



NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED

PCZ Issue: 163 - 88%
Thrill-packed racer from EA, this time with the emphasis on high-speed police chases and notoriety factors. You can still make like Westwood with the car pimping though.

God games



THE MOVIES

PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%
Life as a movie mogul, games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Brilliant.



BLACK & WHITE 2

PCZ Issue: 161 - 93%
The original split opinion, and this sequel does the same. We love it though, and think it's erased all the problems as well as adding plenty of new options to boot. It's gorgeous too.



CIVILIZATION IV

PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%
A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry, sorry place, and luckily the latest version does the business with aplomb. Violent Buddhist Romans take over the world.



EVIL GENIUS

PCZ Issue: 147 - 84%
Ever wanted to say "No Mr Bond, I expect you to die", or create giant evil lairs inside hollow volcanoes? Well now you can with this great megalomaniac sim. It's always fun being bad.



VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

PCZ Issue: 135 - 84%
An in-depth tycoon game with all the 3D graphical glitz and glamour of Vegas itself. Provide hotels, casinos and over-priced magic shows that suck the money out of the punters.

INCOMING!

All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

March

CRASHDAY
CSI: 3 DIMENSIONS OF MURDER
FACES OF WAR
GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS II
LMA MANAGER 2006
THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II
LULA 3D
MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE
OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST
PANZER ELITE ACTION
SPACE EMPIRES V
STAR WARS: EMPIRE AT WAR
STUBBS THE ZOMBIE

ATARI
UBISOFT
UBISOFT
PARADOX INTERACTIVE
CODEMASTERS
EA
CDV
ATARI
SEGA
JOWOOD
STRATEGY FIRST
LUCASARTS
ASPYR

Q2 2006

AUTO ASSAULT
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ONLINE: STORMREACH
GUILD WARS: CHAPTER 2
HEART OF EMPIRE: ROME
HELLGATE: LONDON
HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC V
HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY
HOTEL GIANT 2
NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2
PARAWORLD
PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE
RF ONLINE
RISE & FALL: CIVILIZATIONS AT WAR
RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS
SPELLFORCE II
TABULA RASA
TITAN QUEST
TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT
UBERSOLDIER

NCISOFT
CODEMASTERS
NCISOFT
DEEP SILVER
NAMCO
UBISOFT
EIDOS
JOWOOD
ATARI
JOWOOD
SEGA
CODEMASTERS
MIDWAY
MICROSOFT
JOWOOD
NCISOFT
THQ
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*Final Fantasy XI Online Beta Version for Xbox 360 is playable until closed by Square-Enix, and requires an Xbox Live Gold account, Xbox 360 Hard Drive and a broadband connection.



PCZONE

HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

HARDWARE EDITOR Phil Wand

3G blues

S APPHIRE WAS KIND enough to send me an 'executive diary' with my name emblazoned on the front for Christmas. Bit of an odd choice for a technology company, I thought, given that anyone working around hardware will have ditched paper-based calendars at least a decade ago. All my notes and appointments have been in electronic format for longer than I can remember, and the only person I know who still writes on paper is my nephew. He's four.

Which leads me to last year's biggest disappointment: my 3G mobile. I've mentioned the awful thing before, and even though it keeps me feeling organised, my hatred of it grows by the day. It's an HTC Universal, aka Orange SPV M5000, and has every feature you never need. It's also large, heavy, bug-ridden, capable of draining its battery to an Olympic standard, and slower than a slow-motion replay of four overweight dinosaurs in a heavily-laden milk-float going uphill in the snow.

The biggest problem is that it runs Windows Mobile Edition. It has 50MB memory set aside for programs, half of which is swallowed by Microsoft the moment you turn it on. Open the contacts list, calendar, messaging client and depressingly familiar Solitaire clone, and everything begins to wheeze – if someone phones you, the ringtone actually stutters. Click a button and it takes almost a second to respond.

Maybe the Sapphire diary might come in handy. I'll make a note of when my contract expires and I can go back to a Handspring Treo.

FOUR-PART HARMONY

Dell introduces first ever Quad SLI-certified PC

I KNOW WHAT you're thinking: those flames have been superimposed by some ill-advised Photoshop monkey to make the Dell XPS 600 Renegade stand out from the page and look 'hawi'. They haven't. They're painted on every panel and buyers are left questioning how something as understated as an XPS could be made to look so unbelievably awful.

Anyone buying a Renegade won't be able to tell their friends how their system is the world's first Quad SLI-certified gaming PC, with a quadruplet of GeForce 7800 GTX GPUs capable of running 2560x1600 on Dell's recently debuted Widescreen UltraSharp 3007WFP flat panel, because they'll be too busy swapping jokes about

AMERICANS and taste: like crayons and Camembert.

how your flame-roasted Dell looks like the bonnet of a 1980s Trans-Am.

Your treasured specs list will also be lost to their guffaws, meaning they won't get to find out about the Renegade's dual-core Pentium Extreme Edition (factory clocked past 4.2GHz), 2GB of 667MHz DDR2 RAM, plus a raft of worthwhile extras from Klipsch, Saitek and other hip names.

Of course, get past the looks and envy will creep in. I'd wager that the most popular accessory for British buyers will become a tin of black paint. www.dell.co.uk



NEWS ROUND-UP

ASUS has announced its Lamborghini Notebook Series to rival Acer's established Ferrari line-up (see p96). Specs are not yet available, but ASUS has stated that the units will be based around Intel's next-generation Napa mobile platform, will all be high-end and reassuringly expensive. The notebook design – available only in yellow or black – comes from ASUS's industrial team, and pre-production models look distinctive yet understated. uk.asus.com

Great news! Our favourite hard drive just doubled in size. Western Digital's 10,000rpm Raptor is now 150GB, up from 75GB, remains class-leading in transfer performance and still carries a five-year warranty. Featured in our Buyer's Guide longer than any other hardware item, the Raptor is now the only hard drive choice for home PC builders. www.wdc.com

Following on from last issue's news on Skype, the company has recently announced a number of advancements at this year's Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. The company has partnered with a large number of leading brands including Creative, D-Link and Netgear, and will be offering devices that integrate traditional and Internet telephony. Your phone line's days are numbered. www.skype.com

SOUND OFF SONY
Silent VAIO heads for the living room

The VGX-XL100 home entertainment VAIO works as a noiseless TV tuner, DVD player and burner, jukebox, games machine and home workstation. The XL100 runs XP Media Center Edition and integrates a digital TV receiver, allowing you to record untold amounts of mediocrity from Freeview channels to the 250GB hard drive.

For gamers, the £999 living room rig features a Pentium D 920 chip (a multicore Intel processor running at 2.8GHz), 1GB RAM and a 128MB GeForce 6600 card. You're going to have a tough time

playing *Battlefield 2*, but those specs should be more than adequate for more family-friendly titles. www.vaio.sony-europe.com



THINK it could do with some flames?

WARNING:
THIS MONTH'S
HARD WORDS

BY STEVE HOGARTY

ETHERNET: Cutting-edge fishing technology specifically designed to exclusively catch dolphins, whales, fuzzy little seal cubs and baby seahorses. **ULTRASHARP 3007WFP:** Contains 27 blades for only \$9999, buy now and we'll throw in this free aubergine slicing knife! No more embarrassingly crooked aubergine slices! **BACKUP:** What amazingly obese people enjoy doing on a packed tube train while you're standing behind them struggling to breathe. **NERO 7 PREMIUM:** Would play a fiddle while your CD burned, but doesn't as that legend is actually factually incorrect. So there. **RAID CONTROLLER:** The laziest policeman, preferring to sit outside in the van with a walkie-talkie and a muffin rather than get his hands dirty with the lads.

SCARLET FEVER

The joy of hand-made cars

When a Ferrari shrills past you in the high street, you think of power, exclusivity, beauty, the insurance premium – but much more than that, how the bald pate behind the wheel looks older and fatter than your father.

What you probably don't consider is how dreadful hand-built exotica is in terms of reliability and quality. Rolls-Royce, Bentley, Maserati, Lamborghini, Lotus – until very recently, all the world's exclusive cars were inferior to those produced on any automated production line comprised of multi-million dollar robots. It doesn't take a genius to figure out why.

Get into any model prior to the F355 and be amazed at poor-fitting trim, squeaking plastics and failing mechanicals, all screwed into place by imprecise human hands rather than exacting mechanised claws. I've only known two Ferrari owners, and both were left stranded not long after buying their toys new. I've also been in a couple of the older cars, all of which are slower than my mother's Golf. The classic 308 GTB would lose out to a Toyota Camry over a quarter mile.

If you've murdered your parents and now have enough money to buy a Ferrari, don't let me stop you. Just make sure you have the same money again to shell out when it goes wrong.

FERRARI 4005WMLi

PRICE £1,199 MANUFACTURER Acer PHONE N/A WEBSITE acer.co.uk

LIKE A MCLAREN golfing umbrella or Bugatti cufflinks, there's nothing like a Ferrari notebook to say you'll never own a Ferrari. I'm not sure what possessed Acer to buy the rights to something as unattainable and as kitsch as the prancing horse, but the 4000 series you see here is considerably less offensive than others – the Acer 3400 comes finished in a deafening red and is likely to have passers by tossing their wrists at you. All part of the Ferrari experience.

What the Italian branding does mean is that, aside from the naff desktop and alarming F1 sound clip when XP Pro starts, all 4000 model variations feature a carbon fibre chassis. No, it's not another gimmick – entry-level models tip the scales at just 3.0kg.

Open on the desk, it's a very trim and elegant design, nowhere near as vulgar as you might expect, with touch-friendly rubber-coated internals and a neat, slimmed-down keyboard. Do note that the backlash key has been relocated above the return key, and that the whole layout adopts the shape of a gentle curve – it may look cool and sophisticated, but it takes a great deal of getting used to.

Inside, the specification is comprehensive. There are four USB 2.0 slots, iLink/FireWire, Infrared and VGA ports, a five-in-one card reader, S-Video out, Ethernet and wireless LAN, microphone and headphone jacks, and a slot-load multi-format DVD drive. The screen is a 15.4-inch WSXGA+ LCD

capable of displaying 1680x1050 pixels, and although it's not as bright nor as lucid as the coated Sony and NEC desktop monitors, it's more than capable of doing justice to action games and movies.

In benchmarks, the 1.8GHz AMD Turion 64 processor propels the 4000 along at a decent if not decimating pace, rivalling the scores of the 2.0GHz Pentium M powered Acer Aspire 9504WLMi (issue 163, 84 per cent), but still some way behind the rockdirect XTREME CT/XCT-2.0 (issue 163, 90 per cent). Where the rockdirect zooms

SPECIFICATION

AMD Turion 64 (1.8GHz), XP Pro, 1GB DDR3, 100GB HDD, DVD, 15.4-inch WSXGA (1680x1050), Mobility Radeon X700 128MB, Bluetooth, 5-in-1 card reader, 3.0kg, 12-month warranty.

past 10,000 marks in 3DMark03, the Ferrari saunters past 6,000 for a distant second. Hardly the stuff of Schumacher.

Then again, the rockdirect has a Radeon X800 XT PE 256MB and costs over £200 more, so it shouldn't be a surprise that it reaches the chequered flag first. It's also a more clumsy design and has an Intel engine, so if you're an AMD fan or one of the few people who still watch F1, the Ferrari 4000 could be the no-brainer choice you've been waiting for. And it's still faster than most people's desktops.



PCZONE

VALUE • PERFORMANCE



87

L1717S

PRICE £169
MANUFACTURE LG
WEBSITE www.lge.co.uk

TWENTY YEARS AGO, everyone would have rolled around laughing had they found out you'd bought a Goldstar VHS. As a brand, Goldstar had the same appeal as Saisho, Amstrad or Goodmans, ie none whatsoever. The names were a way of demonstrating you were a colossal tightwad who knew nothing about the kind of product you'd just purchased. Somehow, this message reached Korea, and in 1995 the Seoul-based conglomerate changed its name from Lucky-Goldstar to plain LG. In a stroke, its



goods became almost fashionable – now everyone thinks they're German.

Like so many goods from the Far East, the L1717S exudes dependability but isn't the most exciting screen you could buy. It produces a slightly drab image, something that was exacerbated by having the ViewSonic alongside it. And unlike the identically-priced NEC LCD72VM (issue 164, 84 per cent), it lacks speakers and headphone socket. And that's about it.

SPECIFICATION

Screen size: 17-inches Resolution: 1280x1024
 Response: 12ms Bright/Cont: 250cd/sqm/500:1
 Weight: 4.3kg Connections: Analogue (D-Sub)
 Warranty: 36 months

PCZONE



78

VE710B

PRICE £160
MANUFACTURER ViewSonic
WEBSITE viewsonic.co.uk

THE VE710B HAS a similar specification to the L1717S, but can be had for £10 less at a wider range of retailers. As with most ViewSonic products, it's an undeniably handsome device, making you pleased just to sit in front of it. The front panel has a clear and simple button layout, identical to the brilliant but obsolete Hitachi CML174SX, plus a narrow bezel and less of a pot belly than the LG.

Externally, the only downside is that it has a hardwired cable. It's really not hard to bend pins on analogue video connectors, and doing so with



a hardwired connection requires that you send the whole unit away for repair.

Given its low price, the VE710B produces a first-class picture and there's no trace of ghosting. The image is plainly more charismatic than that of the L1717S, and hence it wins this mini-test.

SPECIFICATION

Screen size: 17-inches Resolution: 1280x1024
 Response: 8ms Bright/Cont: 260cd/sqm/500:1
 Weight: 4.1kg Connections: Hardwired analogue
 Warranty: 36 months

PCZONE



81

ST-11 PRO

PRICE £111
MANUFACTURER Silentmaxx
WEBSITE quietpc.co.uk

SPECIFICATION

Size: 210mm wide, 480mm high, 540mm deep
 Weight: 13.53 kg Boards: AT, ATX, Micro ATX

THE ST-11 PRO case is available in 87 different colours and has bright LED stripes prominent down one side. It's a little too ugly to live in your lounge, but is nicely robust both inside and out. Being German, it's beautifully put together and a pleasure to work on – both side panels open up and the motherboard tray is fully removable. At 3.58kg though, it's a boat, but is still lighter than the 16.3kg Antec.

Silentmaxx fits acoustic dampening material to all exposed areas of the chassis, making any PC you build significantly quieter than a regular case. There are three 5.5-inch and seven 5.25-inch bays, three of



which are given over to third-party drive enclosures such as the Silentmaxx Aluminium HD-Silencer (about £38 per unit), the others employing quicklock mechanisms. The external USB/FireWire connectors are under a flap in the top panel. Highly recommended.

PCZONE



90

P180

PRICE £117
MANUFACTURER Antec
WEBSITE quietpc.co.uk

SPECIFICATION

Size: 206mm wide, 541mm high, deep
 Weight: 16.3 kg Boards: AT, ATX, Micro ATX

IN TERMS OF attention to detail, elegance and overall fit and finish, the P180 is even better than Antec's Sonata. It's also more innovative, with triple-layer sandwich-type side panels, double-hinge doors and a twin chamber interior which isolates the PSU from the hardware by locating it at the bottom – much like Dell does with its XPS.

The P180 supports up to 11 drives, four in 5.25-inch and seven in 3.5-inch bays. The external USB/FireWire connector is front-mounted and there's room for a large TriCool fan at the rear. Antec supplies three of these 120mm fans with a speed control, plus one 38mm fan and a washable air filter.



The only problem with the P180 is that you need your wits about you when installing a new system: the relocation of the PSU means all the cables run the wrong way. But please don't let that put you off.

PCZONE



94

HOW TO...

TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOUR DATA

Need:

Some common sense

Time

Ongoing

Difficulty level

Phil Wand

HAL 9000

Medium Doofus

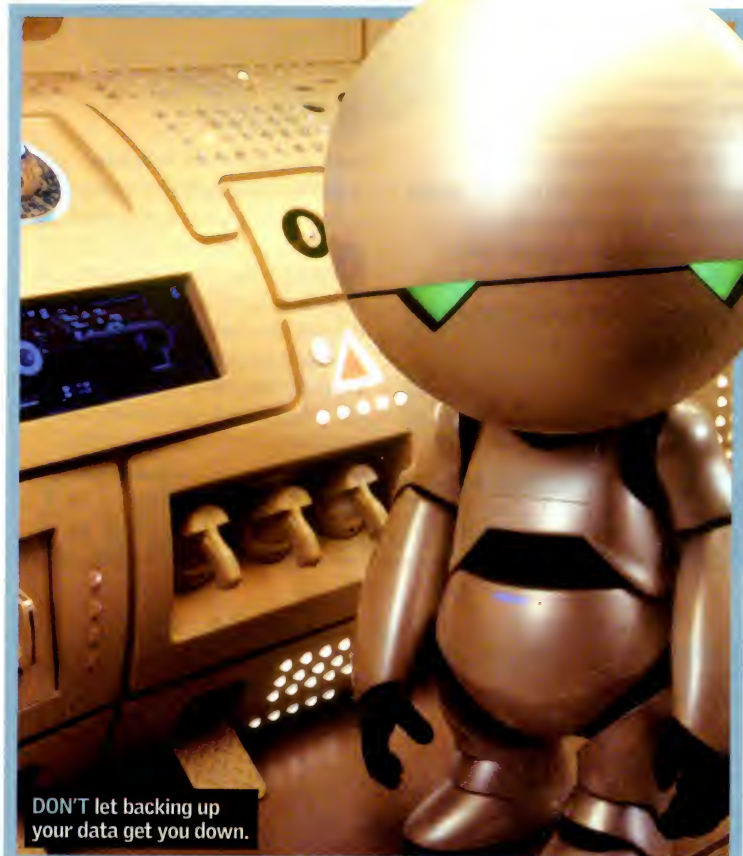
Big Brother contestant

Jamie Sefton

Phil Wand helps you keep your data safe from failing hardware and clumsy presses of the delete key

LOSING IMPORTANT files is like getting a virus: it happens to every Windows user at least once in their life, there's no guaranteed way of preventing it happening and it can be a genuinely upsetting experience, often taking hours or even days to put right. To limit the pain, all you can do is read through the suggestions listed here, pick one or two of them to follow religiously and then try not to leave yourself open to problems.

For example, if your hard drive is out of its warranty or making odd noises, buy a new one. If the power in your area is prone to surges or blackouts, buy a UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply). None of the ideas here will cost you more than the cost of a new game, so you'd be daft not to take better care of your data.



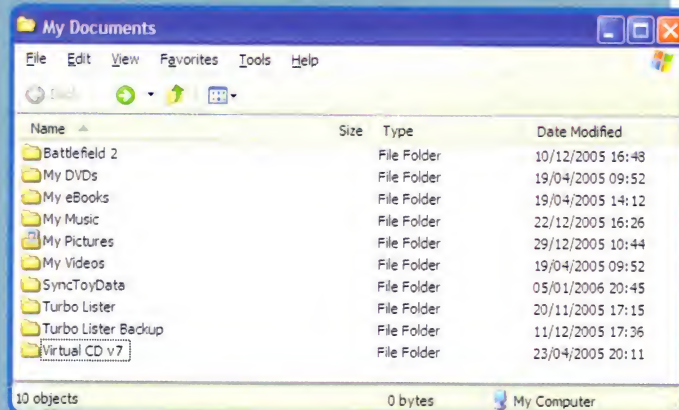
DON'T let backing up your data get you down.



Microsoft SyncToy is something you'll need to Google for. It's small, free and very useful. The multi-talented **Acronis True Image** is available for \$49.99 from www.acronis.com, but to copy snapshots to CD or DVD you'll need **Ahead Nero 7 Premium**, available for \$59.99 from www.ahead.de. If you buy both, True Image will use Nero's burning engine to copy snapshots to removable media, but don't forget that **Windows XP burns CDs natively**. Drag-and-drop your stuff, then choose Burn from the File menu. If you want to add a new hard drive or migrate an existing one, we covered that in issue 162. If you don't want to subscribe, buy any **Western Digital** external USB drive large enough to hold all your data. Right-click on My Documents and choose Properties to see how big a bucket you need.

01 Organise your stuff and keep it together

Don't leave your letters, spreadsheets and downloads mixed up on the desktop. Your desktop should be used as a temporary holding place only, like a big scrapbook, with the files you want to keep, including drivers and installations, going into My Documents instead. As well as recent games such as *Battlefield 2* and *Need for Speed: Most Wanted* now storing player data here, keeping everything under one roof lessens the chance of you excluding key files from your backup.



VITAL data gets stored in the My Documents folder. Remember to include it in all your backups.

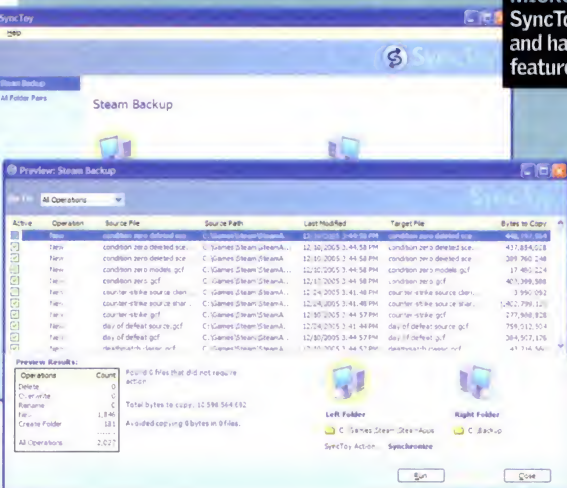
WARNING: DON'T BE A CHEAPSKATE

Think you're an Internet smartypants using search tools to find the cheapest CDs and DVDs, don't you? What you might not realise is that blank media is degradable, and when handled improperly could last less than two years before throwing errors. Two years might seem a long time to you, but when you consider that premium-quality discs can last a century or more, 24 months is pretty damn brief. Always buy branded media from big names and avoid budget buys – my recommendation would be TDK ScratchProof. Once written, put the disc back in its box and keep it in a dark cupboard.

02 Duplicate your files

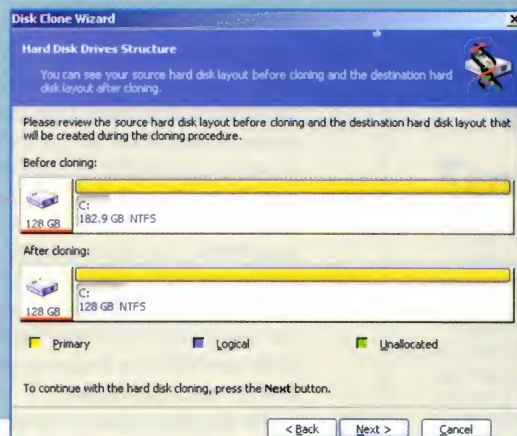
One of the easiest ways to save your data is to install a second hard drive and keep a copy of everything there as well. Use Microsoft SyncToy to create a folder pair – one the My Documents folder, the other a new folder on the new second drive – and everything you put into the former will be intelligently copied to the latter. Do not copy your data to another partition on the same hard drive, because if the hard drive fails, you'll lose everything.

MICROSOFT SyncToy is free and has all the features you need.



03 Get shot of System Restore

Because Acronis True Image takes a snapshot of your entire disk, you can restore your system without having to format or re-install. Use its scheduling feature to create a daily incremental snapshot and save it to a secondary or external USB hard drive. If you need to go back in time, click the calendar and it will recreate your PC as it was on the chosen date. This sort of power means you can junk System Restore for good.



ACRONIS True Image turns cloning your hard drive into something so simple and obvious, it could be a Carla Lane comedy.

04 Burn a regular backup CD or DVD

Most PCs these days have a CD or DVD burner, but most people use them for mundane tasks such as making iTunes compilations for the car or handing out odd files to friends. If you use a CD or DVD drive in conjunction with Ahead Nero 7 Premium, you'll be able to keep a snapshot of your system safely in the cupboard – Nero can create a compressed copy of your drive and copy it to multiple CDs or DVDs.

AHEAD Nero has a number of useful backup features which most users simply ignore.



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS

Got something you want to ask? Just want something else to read? Either way, this little box is sure to make you happy.

- ✗ **How do I back up my applications?**
- ✓ Applications aren't fenced within your Program Files folder, they're fragmented all over your system. Your best bet is to make sure you back up the original installation files.
- ✗ **Can't I just copy my stuff to an old hard drive?**
- ✓ Please don't. Modern drives have considerably better MTBF (Mean Time Before Failure) ratings, longer warranties and a higher tolerance to vibration.
- ✗ **Why isn't this free?**
- ✓ Your computer wasn't free, and keeping it properly maintained, properly protected and properly backed up isn't free either. So stop being a pikey tightwad and cough up.

05 Create a RAID array

Pick a random motherboard from a random motherboard maker and there's a high chance it'll feature a RAID controller. There may be one inside your PC, but like most people you're not using it. What RAID allows you to do is add another hard drive to your machine so that in the event of one failing, the other keeps going. Simple as that. It's not foolproof, but the technology is tried and tested and used the world over. If you have it, why not use it?

THESE days, everyone can do RAID. If your motherboard doesn't have a RAID controller, you can buy one for under £40.





DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...



Problems?

We've all got them you know... Up to your neck in debt? Partner sleeping around? A propensity to wake up on Saturday morning with a kebab and beer can stuck to your face? We can't help with any of those (but if you know the answers, let us know), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at wandy@dearwandy.com, including as much information as necessary and system specs where applicable.

BUDGET BUSTERS

Q It's been three years since I last updated my PC and I've decided it's time to spend some money. I was going to choose an Athlon 64 3700+, but while browsing spotted AMD's X2 Dual-Core range. Is the X2 significantly better, and why is the X2 3800+ the same price as a plain 3800+? I also plan to make the change from AGP to PCI-Express, and after reading the latest *PC ZONE* have decided that the GIGABYTE GV-NX66TI28VP Turbo Force will do me fine as a graphics card. But which motherboard?

The only other upgrade I'm thinking about is memory – I plan to cannibalise everything else from my current machine unless you think otherwise. My budget is between £300-£400.

Damon Mears

A The Athlon 64 X2 3800+ is a fine processor, and though its lower transistor count and smaller die might put off a small minority of hardcore nutcases, it does mean it's available at a very enticing price. Like most Athlons, the X2 3800+ enjoys having its bottom spanked – it can be clocked to 2.4GHz without

ATI drivers now make use of multi-core Athlon 64 X2 and Intel Pentium D processors, although whether you'll feel the difference depends on what you play and at what resolution.

The 939-pin AMD motherboard I'd recommend without hesitation is ABIT's Fatal1ty AN8 SLI, but a look at your budget means I'm not so sure you can pack all this in. The 3800+ processor will set you back £200, the GIGABYTE 7800 GTX is at least £350, and the Fatal1ty board is £130 before you've added 1GB DDR400 memory – a total of almost £700! Seeing as you're clearly someone who likes a bit of power under the lid, I'd either search hard for a bargain or drop your sights a little. The 7800 GT is an excellent alternative to the GTX, and the ABIT KN8 half the cost of the AN8.

Cadbury's Chocolate Eclairs you see swinging from hooks at BP service stations.

The problem with a boxed Intel processor, aside from the fact it's not a boxed AMD processor, is the rhinoceros snot Intel plasters over the bottom of the heat sink and passes off as thermal compound. It's rubbish and you should wipe it off the moment you open the packet – assuming you haven't already put a thumbprint in it, like my brother did recently. You can keep the sink and fan, but for the compound use something superior like OCZ Ultra, GeIL Copper or Arctic Ceramique – you'll never hear those warning beeps again. Just don't go mad with the stuff like you were icing a cake. All you need is a small blob spread thinly with the edge of an old credit card.

"But Wandy," I hear you ask, raising a polite but questioning finger. "Intel is a large manufacturer of advanced microprocessors and integrated circuits, whereas you're just some geek on a page. What do you know?" And the answer is, the larger the corporation, the more interest it has in pleasing its shareholders and the less interest it has in customers.



THE HEAT IS ON

Q A few months back I shopped online for some budget hardware components with the intention of building a complete £300 desktop PC based around a Pentium 4. I built the machine in an afternoon and have been delighted not only with the fact it didn't explode when I turned it on, but also with its performance – of course, it's all the sweeter knowing I stuck to my budget.

However, I have this recurring problem of the processor temperature shooting beyond 80-degrees and need your help. I get the warning beeps, my games become unplayable and I have to quit back to the desktop to allow the CPU to cool down. I'm using a brand new Pentium chip that came from a genuine Intel box, with heat sink and fan. Is the processor damaged somehow? What could be wrong?

Tom Vilsack

A If I had 7p each time someone wrote in and complained about their CPU temperature hitting boiling point after fitting a boxed Intel processor, I'd be able to treat myself to one of those big bags of

BIGGER IS BETTER

Q I have an ASUS K8V Deluxe motherboard, and I'd like to know what's the most powerful CPU I can fit to it? Currently, Belarc tells me I have a 2.0GHz AMD Athlon 64.

Andy Ibbott

A To find out what CPU you can buy for your motherboard, the first place you should look is the manufacturer's website. Most of the time, you'll be delighted to find that a board's specification matures with age – BIOS updates and improvements often allow it to talk to a wider range of processors than at launch.

In the case of the K8V Deluxe, the specification on the ASUS website suggests that any 754-pin AMD Athlon 64 processor will work. However, the downloads section is poorly documented and the BIOS updates are direct links to binary files and are devoid of any supporting literature. That said, the support section does have a



A monster card. At a monster price.

problem – and for gamers it's unquestionably faster than its Intel rival, the Pentium D processor 830.

As for the Dual-Core chips being the same price as their single-core equivalents, they're not. The X2 3800+ is essentially a pair of Athlon 64 3200+ chips lashed together with some insane electronics, and you're going to pay a premium for the configuration. Generally speaking, it'll cost you an extra £40. But it's worth it.

The multiple core route is also an ideal partner for recent graphics cards such as the GV-NX66TI28VP Turbo Force you mentioned in your letter. Both NVIDIA and

DRIVER WATCH

Keep your PC happy

GRAPHICS

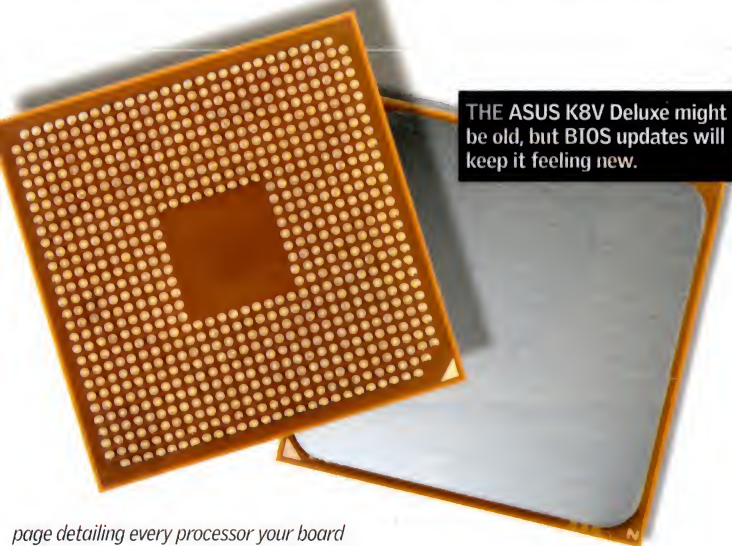
MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 5.12	08-DEC-05
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE B195	22-NOV-05

SOUND

MANUFACTURER	DESC	RELEASED
Creative	SOUND BLASTER X-FI 2.070003	22 AUG 05
Creative	AUDIGY 2 VALUE 2.08.0002 BETA	21 SEP 05

Don't go mad like you're icing a cake – you just need a small blob spread thinly with an old credit card

Wandy's cooling, soothing advice to an overheated Tom Vilsack



THE ASUS K8V Deluxe might be old, but BIOS updates will keep it feeling new.

page detailing every processor your board will accept, together with the BIOS release which introduced it. Nice.

To cut a long story short, you can put a new Athlon 64 3700+ on the K8V as long as you download and install BIOS version 1007. Your current 3200+ is a great chip, and one that's easily clocked, but the 3700+ has a frequency of 2.4GHz and for the princely sum of £175, you should find the extra power is noticeable.

Assuming you've ruled out these options, there are products which will allow you to copy your data to a device on your network. The Netgear SC101 costs £80 and has slots for up to two hard drives and an Ethernet port. The downside is you need to install drivers and management software, which being Windows-only rules out Mac and Linux users. My experience of a similar device, the Freecom Classic SL, is that the drivers can be slow and unreliable. If you can, go for something like the £170 Hawking HNAS1 Net-Stor which, like a broadband router, has all its brains onboard, and you configure it by browsing to it. **PCZ**

NETWORK DUMP

Q I have a spare 20GB hard drive knocking about at home, and after an incident involving my laptop and some water, I thought it might be wise to make it into a backup drive – I can then have a copy of the important stuff that's on there. I'd like to connect it to a network on its own, so ideally the enclosure should have an Ethernet connection. Do you know of one?

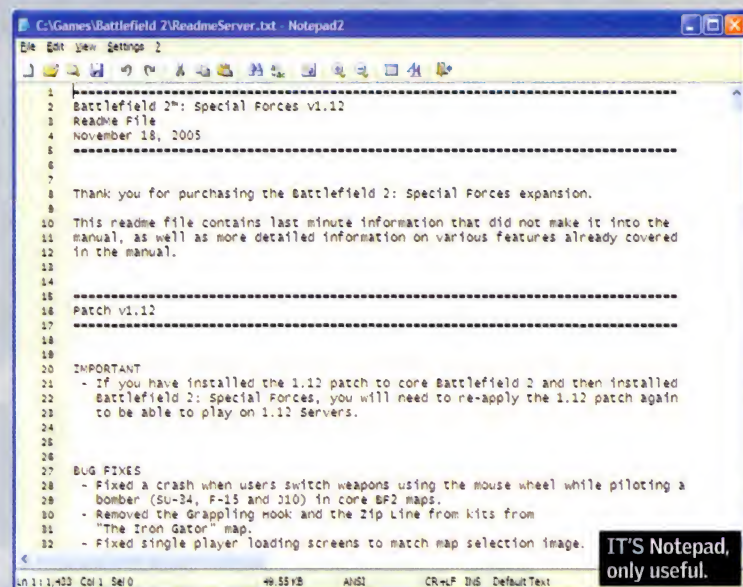
Coelicolour

A If you're backing up crucial data to HDD, the drive should be a recent purchase and still under warranty. Hard drives are mechanical devices which are likely to go wrong in the time that you own them. A more secure way of storing your clobber would be burning it to DVDs or paying for a service such as BT Home PC Backup, where you transfer your files over the Internet to a remote backup facility.



TOASTER and piggy bank loved each other very much.

50 UTILITIES YOU HAVE TO USE BEFORE YOU DIE



7 NOTEPAD2

EXPECT TO PAY Free

flos-freeware.ch

As Windows has become more advanced, more secure and more useful, so its text editor – an application most of us call upon at least

twice a day – has remained stuck in the Middle Ages. It might be fast and tiny, and isn't laden with stupid overweight features like every other Microsoft product you could mention, but it does lack a lot of the functionality many users now take for granted.

For example, it doesn't support simple things such as drag-and-drop text editing, nor does it know anything about syntax highlighting or indenting if you're mucking about in HTML or PHP or even

batch files. It doesn't have a toolbar, let alone a customisable toolbar, and there are no useful tricks like upper/lower case changing, Mac/DOS file conversion or line markers. I won't go on because you're no doubt intimately familiar with Notepad and its numerous limitations.

Luckily, Notepad2 has all the key missing features in its repertoire and a few more up its sleeve – but without being bloated with rubbish gimmicks like the more recent versions of Microsoft Word. And although there are a number of similar replacements around, including Metapad and Editpad, Notepad2 is an inexplicably nicer thing to use. Like a Nokia phone.

If you fancy giving it a whirl, there are several things you need to do to replace the Notepad on your system. First, download the executable, then copy it to your Windows directory, and also to ServicePackFiles\386, system32 and system32\dllcache beneath it. Don't forget to take a backup of the original in case you change your mind though.

**WARNING:
DON'T TRY
THIS AT HOME!**

A week ago I upgraded my trusty Handspring Treo 600 phone to an Orange SPV M5000, otherwise known as the HTC Universal. It's a Windows Mobile device, meaning much of it looks and feels like the Windows you know and hate. It's also rather slow and deliberate in everything it does, like a retarded last-generation Nokia, making it even more like Windows than Windows is. Be warned though, that the synchronisation software demands that you have Outlook installed on your system. So if you're one of those people who removed it, like me, you'll have to put it back. Bastards.



Creative's X-Fi is the new PC audio standard and must be heard to be believed

COMBINE the X-Fi with a media centre set-up to attain audio nirvana.

PC AUDIO TO THE XTREME

High-fidelity is no longer good enough; for a peerless PC audio entertainment experience, you need Xtreme Fidelity



YOU WOULDN'T go to the cinema if the sound system consisted of two small speakers, one on either side of the screen. Likewise, you wouldn't expect to get the most out of a film on DVD just by playing the soundtrack through your TV set's asthmatic cans. So why settle for sub-standard audio when you're playing games, watching movies or listening to music on your PC? The astonishing thing is that many of you reading this right now are doing just that. Maybe you're using your motherboard's onboard audio processor or a basic PCI soundcard that was on special offer the

last time you upgraded or built your system. It's no exaggeration to say that you could be doing a lot better. Even if you've got one of Creative's earlier Sound Blaster cards, such as a Live or Audigy series, you're lagging behind in the PC audio stakes. The bar has been raised so significantly with the arrival of Creative's new Sound Blaster X-Fi, that the breakthrough new audio standard has to be heard to be believed.

SONIC BOOM

Adding an X-Fi to your system will revolutionise the way you appreciate

music, movies and gaming – and straight out of the box too. This is achieved via a combination of incredibly advanced audio enhancement technologies, backed by the power of its all-new audio processor that's as powerful as a 34GHz Intel Pentium 4 chip and 24 times as powerful as the Audigy it supersedes. As well as enhancing and improving all of your existing audio content, it takes games like *Quake 4* and *Battlefield 2* to a whole new level via support for the new EAX Advanced HD 5.0 standard. Put simply, it delivers previously unimaginable levels of audio quality and surround sound immersion. For example, the X-Fi is the first audio processor to enable hardware accelerated 128-voice support – with one "voice" being a single sound effect. When





you consider that *Battlefield 2* can feature up to 64 players and vehicles, each generating multiple sounds, motherboard audio or previous soundcards quickly reach their limitation of 32-64 voices. Stick in an X-Fi however, select "Creative X-Fi" and "Ultra-High" Sound quality in the audio options and you'll be amazed at the difference, with up to 128 simultaneous voices delivering a gaming experience that blows away anything you've heard before. However, unlike the Live! or Audigy, which relied to some extent on games supporting newer and newer versions of EAX to give you a significant difference compared to other audio solutions, X-Fi makes an immediate impact on your existing games, no matter how old they are or whether they support any level of EAX. On headphones, the brand-new CMSS-3DHeadphone (Creative Multi Speaker Surround) technology externalises the audio by creating 10 virtual speakers around, above and below you, and delivers the most realistic surround sound experience on headphones you've ever heard. The experience is so real you'll forget you're wearing headphones and actually provides you with a crucial in-game advantage: by allowing you to pinpoint your enemies from the sound of their footsteps or noises that they make.

CMSS3D is equally effective with speakers, by using virtual positions to place sounds anywhere around you, so your gaming audio is no longer restricted by the number or placement of your speakers.

But perhaps what's most impressive is that the X-Fi can do all this without placing any extra burden on your PC's processor. In fact, games like *Battlefield 2* can run up to 40% faster on an X-Fi-equipped system when compared to one using motherboard audio that relies on your CPU to process audio effects in the game.

Additionally, the X-Fi 24-bit Crystalizer automatically upgrades existing game soundtracks and effects to Xtreme Fidelity. It converts all audio, of any format, into 24-bit quality and then enhances it to make games sound more dynamic and realistic than you've ever experienced.

MUSIC SOUNDS BETTER WITH YOU

It's particularly effective when you're listening to music; if you play an MP3 on the Sound Blaster X-Fi, it can sound better than the original CD version! By analysing and processing the music, the

24-bit Crystalizer is able to intelligently restore it to as close to the original CD version as possible. It is also effective across the full audio spectrum, and is flexible enough to focus on specific areas without impacting adjoining audio elements. In this manner, all of your music can be experienced in 24-bit, 96kHz fidelity – you'll never go back to an ordinary home stereo again.

The X-Fi 24-bit Crystalizer upgrades existing game soundtracks to 24-bit quality

The X-Fi manages to do all this by harnessing the power of its audio processor to apply the enhancements in real-time, without impacting upon the overall system performance, to any piece of audio content on your PC, whether it's a game, an MP3, DivX soundtrack, streaming internet audio or CD. You can enjoy the performance benefits straight away; you don't need to wait for the technologies to be supported in future products or have to buy more expensive versions of movies and music that you already own.

CRYSTAL CLEAR

If you're having trouble imagining how big a difference all this will make to your everyday PC entertainment, it can be summed up like this: it's as if you'd been listening to your games, movies and music with a blanket draped over your PC's speakers for all these years. The instant improvement gained by switching to an X-Fi setup really is that profound. So, what are you waiting for?

Go X-Fi today. **PCZ**

Now hear this

The best in-game sound ever

GAMING

Support for EAX Advanced HD 5.0 ensures that today's games sound better than ever, but the X-Fi also delivers enhanced performance with older titles. Its powerful audio processor can create a virtual surround-sound effect over headphones as well as remix audio into 24-bit quality, all on-the-fly and without impacting the overall performance of your system. In addition, the Fatal1ty and Elite Pro versions also feature 64MB of X-RAM*, enabling developers to deliver even higher-quality audio samples that can be loaded into dedicated audio RAM rather than system RAM, which makes for even faster gaming performance.

*Supplied with Platinum, Fatal1ty and Elite Pro versions.

MUSIC

The X-Fi 24-bit Crystalizer enhances all of your music on-the-fly, whether it's an MP3, WMA or ordinary CD. It can restore the audio quality that was lost when the CD tracks were compressed to MP3 and WMA, and, combined with CMSS-3D, can make them sound better than the original disc. You can also use the SuperRip facility to convert 16-bit stereo CD tracks into 24-bit 5.1 WMA files.

MOVIES

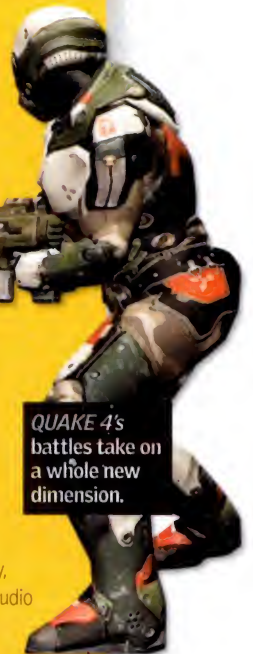
Turn on the 24-bit Crystalizer and your DVD movies will never have sounded so realistic. With support for Dolby Digital EX and DTS-ES, the X-Fi is an ideal component for a media centre PC and the CMSS-3D technology can turn a stereo soundtrack from a DivX movie into an immersive multi-channel experience that rivals that of a DVD. Combined with the Entertainment Centre software and remote*, you can take control of your media from the comfort of your sofa!

*An optional upgrade is available for XtremeMusic version

AUDIO CREATION

With the Sound Blaster X-Fi audio processor, you'll get the most advanced sound creation features and effects of any audio processor currently available, delivering pristine audio playback quality. It supports ASIO recordings with latency as low as one millisecond, up to eight different hardware effects and 24-bit SoundFont sampling, and X-Fi's 3D MIDI functions provide amazing flexibility and recording results.

QUAKE 4's battles take on a whole new dimension.



MORE INFO

You can find out more about the Creative Sound Blaster X-Fi and download three exclusive demos that showcase the X-Fi's power at www.europe.creative.com/xfi – what are you waiting for? For more X-Fi content, see our cover DVD.



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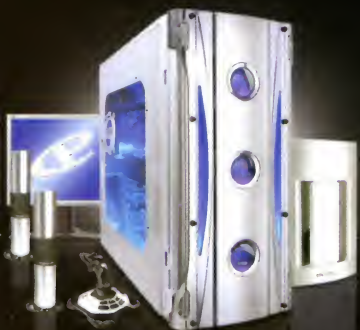
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WATCHDOG

Rotten companies need sorting – and good ones need praising...

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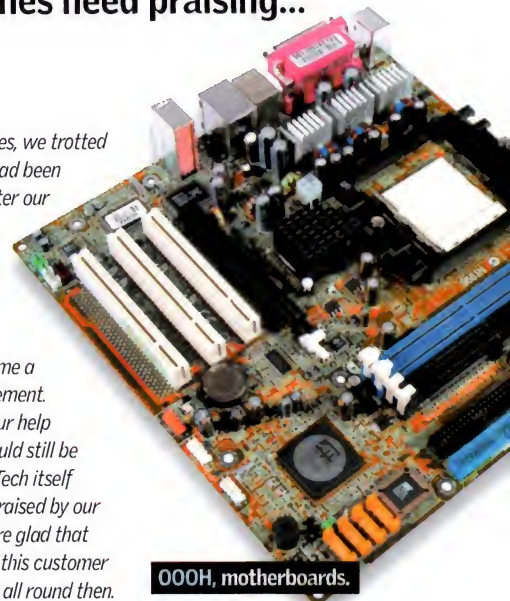
Companies pissing you off? Don't feel your voice is strong enough to shout down the suits? Email Suzy at watchdog@pczone.co.uk with the subject heading 'Watchdog', or write to her at the address above. Pleased remember to include your name, address and contact number, and all purchasing details such as reference and invoice numbers.

THE BFG

What's a great computer without a decent graphics card to go with it? Not a whole lot of good, as reader Peter McMillan knows. So when he treated himself to a shiny new PC 12 months ago, he also added the best graphics card he could afford: BFG's overclocked 6600GT card. Thinking that all was well, Peter was understandably a bit upset when *Half-Life 2* started to suffer with glitches and artifacting. In fact, every game he owned was starting to suffer and

Understanding Peter's troubles, we trotted off to BFG to find out what had been going on. Barely two days after our contact, Peter called us:

"I've just received an email from a product manager at BFG. He apologised for the way I've been treated and because of this, he's sending me a 6800 Ultra AGP as a replacement. Thank you so much for all your help as I'm certain my matter would still be unresolved without it." BFG Tech itself added: "We take every issue raised by our customers seriously, and we're glad that we were able to take care of this customer satisfactorily." A great result all round then.



000H, motherboards.

ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

Some people are definitely more technically-minded than others. While some of us might struggle to even install a new graphics card, Terence Hoosen was busy ordering parts from Micro Direct to build himself his very own server.

Having ordered an MSI motherboard along with a few other items, he happily went to install the parts, only to find that the motherboard wouldn't even enter the BIOS POST sequence. No beeps, no video output, in fact no response whatsoever. So

manual for the old model." This left Terence with a useless motherboard and the dreams of his server fast receding. Despite sending off several emails about the situation, he got no further response from Micro Direct.

We got in contact with Micro Direct, who at first stated that the new motherboard had been sent out without the parts that were missing from the originally-returned card. When we pointed out that Terence had actually stated that he returned all of



A speedy card, when it works.

Peter was stumped. In an attempt to remedy the problem he installed some new drivers, but soon the entire PC began to freeze after five minutes of playing.

After numerous emails to BFG's tech support, Peter narrowed the problem down to overheating and duly discovered a dodgy heatsink. While still trying to contact BFG to get an RMA, Peter purchased a fan, but this only brought a temporary reprieve. Meanwhile, he'd had no reply from BFG.

After months of trying to contact the company and only receiving the odd unhelpful reply in return, he eventually got an RMA number, but was informed that he would only receive a straight replacement. Peter wasn't happy with this, explaining that he'd spent nearly 12 months without a working card and by the time he got one, it'd be out of date and only worth about half of what he'd originally paid for it.

To sort the problem he installed new drivers, but soon the PC began to freeze after five mins of playing

Terence obtained an RMA number and returned the motherboard.

Soon afterwards, he received a call from Micro Direct stating that he'd not sent back all initially included items. Terence told us: "This is untrue; I sent back the serial port riser card, the SATA cable, the CD to motherboard audio cable – the lot."

Thinking the issue to be just a mix-up, he was happy when Micro Direct stated that it didn't have any more of his motherboard in stock, and so would kindly replace it with the model up. Or not so kindly, as Terence discovered as when it arrived: "The company didn't include the IO backplate, the audio, video and USB riser cards. In fact, Micro Direct didn't supply the correct manual either, including instead the

the original parts, the representative from Micro Direct was quick to comment that the company would resolve the issue anyway out of good will.

"Micro Direct does follow very stringent ISO 90001 quality-assured procedures which are audited on a six-monthly basis. While we do our very best to ensure that we bring to you the best quality components from all over the world, we do also accept that some components do go faulty and returns are sometimes necessary. However, to try and prevent further inconvenience, we will now seek to rectify the matter as soon as possible." Good news for Terence, and once he receives all of parts, his dreams of owning his own server should come true. **PC**

THE ACCUSED



[BFG Tech.com]



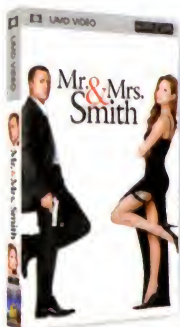
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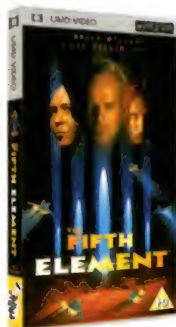
OUT 25th NOV



OUT 2nd DEC



OUT 5th DEC



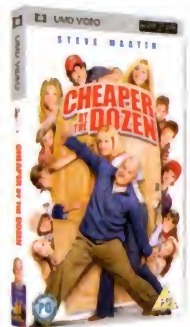
OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC



OUT 5th DEC

REMEMBER:
YOU ALSO NEED
MONEY FOR FOOD
AND CLOTHING

We are legally required to remind readers that money splashed on hardware may be better spent on families, wives and girlfriends. *PC ZONE* isn't liable for any estrangement that may ensue.

HARDWARE DIVIDE

What better way to show your Valentine love than with a spangly new piece of kit?

LOADED?

GRAPHICS

GV-NX78X256V-B

EXPECT TO PAY £350

MANUFACTURER GIGABYTE

WEBSITE uk.giga-byte.com

Emphatically the fastest card we've tested. Unlike our favourite 6600 GT, GIGABYTE's 7800 GTX is built to reference specifications with a 430MHz processor and 256MB of 1.2GHz DDR3. Hunt around and you can buy an even faster variant or just overclock the crap out of this one. It seems to enjoy it.



PROCESSOR



ATHLON 64 FX-57

EXPECT TO PAY

£700

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

For extreme performance, the flagship Athlon is the only processor to buy – even if it makes the same dent in your bank account as last month's mortgage payment. With AMD's new memory controller, unlocked multiplier and highest ever clock speed, the latest FX is the fastest thing inside any PC.

MOTHERBOARD



FATALITY AN8 SLI

EXPECT TO PAY

£130

MANUFACTURER

ABIT

WEBSITE www.abit.com.tw

Designed specifically for gaming, the nForce4 SLI-based Fatal1ty AN8 supports all 939-pin AMD processors. As well as SLI support it features ABIT's Guru Panel, a front-mounted display unit for overclockers. The board also uses a bevy of ABIT features, including OTES cooling and AudioMAX 7.1 onboard audio.

HDD



RAPTOR 74GB

EXPECT TO PAY

£118

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

Travelling at 10,000rpm and with a 4.5ms seek time, the Raptor is billed as the world's fastest SATA drive. And although it's not especially large, it's big enough for a dedicated gaming rig. Two of them in RAID 0 configuration will give you almost 150GB and really make *Battlefield 2* fly.

SCREEN



MULTISYNC LCD1970GX

EXPECT TO PAY

£360

MANUFACTURER

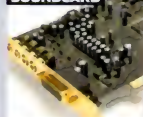
NEC Mitsubishi

WEBSITE

www.nec-display-solutions.co.uk

The LCD1970GX is a 19in LCD screen, with an 8ms response time and an inky black glass screen that saturates all the colours and darkens the shadows. It includes a joystick controller for the on-screen display, and a four-port USB hub.

SOUNDCARD



SOUND BLASTER X-FI FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY

£179

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles with deep pockets. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal. Sounds nicer than an Audigy, but still painfully pricey.

SPEAKERS



Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY

£220

MANUFACTURER

Logitech

WEBSITE www.logitech.co.uk

They'll cost you over £200, but they're also the best speakers we've ever tested at *PC ZONE*. They make both games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself blowing the dust from your old CDs and DVDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

SKINT?

GRAPHICS

X800 GTO

EXPECT TO PAY £115

MANUFACTURER GECUBE

WEBSITE gecube.com.tw

You could save yourself a tenner and go for the 8-pipeline GT, but you'd be missing out. The GTO is without doubt the mainstream card to go for: an overclocking dream, it can trump the 6800 GT on maximum detail and this GECUBE comes with a heat-pipe and sensible bundle.



PROCESSOR



ATHLON 64 3000+

EXPECT TO PAY

£95

MANUFACTURER

AMD

WEBSITE www.amd.co.uk

If you don't mind getting your hands dirty in the BIOS, Athlon 64s can be highly rewarding – particularly so on an nForce4 motherboard. Famous for overclocking and top performance in games, there's really no alternative. This AMD chip is the one to have if you're building to a budget.

MOTHERBOARD



A8N-E NFORCE4 ULTRA

EXPECT TO PAY £80

MANUFACTURER

ASUSTek

WEBSITE uk.asus.com

The A8N-E supports the full range of Athlon 64 FX, dual-core Athlon 64 X2 and Athlon 64 chips, plus PCI Express and 7.1 channel audio. The nForce4 Ultra chipset has more features than a circus has clowns, and ASUS includes a raft of its own, as well as some serious overclocking tools.

HDD



1200JD SATA

EXPECT TO PAY

£55

MANUFACTURER

Western Digital

WEBSITE www.westerndigital.com

It's not like a 120GB hard drive is unfeasibly huge any more, but it's more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, a couple of hundred music files and the odd porn flick will still leave plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.

SCREEN



VE710S

EXPECT TO PAY

£152

MANUFACTURER

ViewSonic

WEBSITE www.viewsonic.co.uk

Not a lot of dosh buys you an awful lot of screen. The VE710S is a budget-priced 17in flat panel featuring an 8ms response time and 1,280x1,024 resolution and producing bright, crisp images worthy of the ViewSonic name. The company's UltraBrite technology gives rich and vivid colours in games.

SOUNDCARD



SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY

£34

MANUFACTURER Creative Labs

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

If you're a casual gamer, there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard because you'll not be able to tell the difference. The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support, and makes an awful lot of sense.

SPEAKERS



INSPIRE P5800

EXPECT TO PAY

£40

MANUFACTURER

Creative

WEBSITE uk.europe.creative.com

You can go cheaper, but to meet the quality of the P5800 you'll need spend a lot more, as there's no better set in this price range. The subwoofer is deep and creamy, the satellites crisp and clean. A wired remote, line-in and headphone jack complete a very decent little package.

**PSYCHONAUTS WANTED THIS NOVEMBER
FOR HILARIOUS THIRD PERSON ADVENTURE THROUGH 13 UNIQUE LEVELS!**



**FROM TIM SCHAFER, THE CREATOR OF
GRIM FANDANGO AND DAY OF THE TENTACLE**

Psychonauts

89%
PC Gamer

90%
PC Zone

91%
PC Format

**Hugely intensitive, charming and funny. Psychonauts is
a surprise hit and this year's star platformer."**

Official PlayStation®2 Mag



PlayStation.2



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FRONTIER

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PCZONE

FREEPLAY

Skint? Play PC games for zero notes...

DISC EDITOR Suzy Wallace

WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

FREE
GAMES!

Mods & Rockers

WAY BACK IN the swirling mists of time (OK, seven months ago), in the days before the introduction of the Freeplay section, the total number of mods I'd played barely outstripped the number of brain cells in the average *Big Brother* contestant. Since then, that figure is fast catching up to the number of times I utter the F-word in a day. You see, with so many modders out there eager to bring their vision to life, there's an almost unlimited choice for the discerning gamer.

Take this month's mods for example: love *Half-Life 2* but always fancied seeing what it'd be like to play from the other side? Problem solved with *Combine Destiny*. Ever wondered what the original *Doom* would look like in *Doom 3*'s engine? The answer awaits you in *Classic Doom*. And with the influx of new releases slowing to the pace of a faulty electric stairlift, I can't think of a better way to get you through the cold, dark months of winter. Now we're just waiting for a mod that features robot ninja pirates and life will be perfect.

Try this!

Let Kong live in *King Kong*!



Everyone knows how the film ends, but to unlock a happier ending for the loveable ape, you'll have to complete the entire game and then go on to rack up a tidy 250,000 points. Once you've done this, you'll be privy to an alternate ending that's far more cheers than tears.



112 Demo Pages

Your first port of call for free games!



114 Buzz

News and culture from a world of free PC gaming



118 Freeware

The best darn free games on t'Internet



120 Play!

Essential reviews of the latest mods, maps and add-ons



128 Make the most of Call Of Duty 2

Shoot! Flank! Kill!



131 How To Make A Game

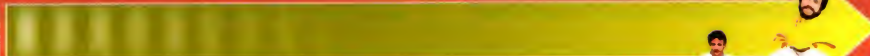
Play the *Gibbage* demo!



PCZONE
FREE-O-METER



0
HOURS



194.3
HOURS*

*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



FREEPLAYDEMOS

Demos

On the DVD - free games galore!



21
PLAYABLE
DEMOS
ON THE DVD!



DISC TROUBLES?

Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover-disc support. Alternatively, email support@futurenet.co.uk, including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.



TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

Combine the pedal with the metal in Codemasters' all-encompassing racer www.codemasters.co.uk/tocaracedriver3 | ETA: February 24



IT MUST BE really tough to work at Codemasters. Every morning you get up, shower, towel off, dress, then drive through sunny Warwickshire to the magnificent gaming pavilion at its centre. But having driven for half an hour or so, you then have a job that involves you driving imaginary computer cars all day -

comparing them to your morning drive and ticking boxes about gears and inertia-dampening fields.

At the end of the day you have to get in your car AGAIN and go home. And, presumably, once you're home you won't be able to think of anything apart from the bit of your journey when you were just turning left down The Parade at the top of Royal Leamington Spa and your clutch felt slightly wobbly. You'll start worrying whether or not that contradicted one of the 'wobbly clutch' realism boxes that you ticked earlier in the day. Then you'd have to do it all over again the next day, and even if it was the weekend your wife might ask you to drive to Sainsbury's. Anyway, here's the TOCA 3 demo.



KLASSE IN A GLASS

First off, there's the AMG Mercedes C-Klasse, which is a German touring car. So you'll be seeing the sights, eating cake in the Black Forest, while homo-erotically slapping bearded men on the back. And driving - you'll drive too.



HOLDEN' ON

A Holden Commodore VZ? Who'd name a car after something you played Q*Bert on? If I was going to name a sports car after an '80s gaming platform, then it'd be called Spectrum. And the six-cylinder Mega-Turbo Spectrum XS at that.

SHOTGUN! Your TOCA 3 demo experience filtered into four boxes of equal comic worth



DESKTOP

Once you've finished playing the TOCA 3 demo, you'll quit out of the game using the menu system, where you'll be confronted by your own personal desktop (not this one, this is Will's). If you've enjoyed yourself, pre-order a copy of TOCA 3 today.



BAJA ON THE BEACH

Surprisingly, cars can drive on sand without sinking - especially if you put a special filter on the exhaust pipe to stop it from sucking up sand and lost children. Anyway, the K500 Pro Baja Dune racer is just such a creature.

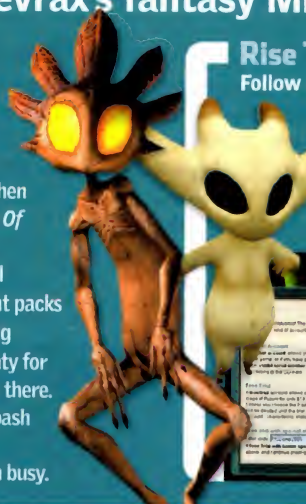


THE SAGA OF RYZOM

Go organic in Nevrax's fantasy MMORPG

www.ryzom.com | ETA: Out now!

IF YOU'RE A lover of MMOs, you may be a little bored of slaughtering rats in a standard fantasy world by now. If you fancy something a bit different, then the sci-fi/organic MMO *The Saga Of Ryzom* could be just the ticket. Featuring a living, changing world packed to bursting with intelligent packs of wild animals, naturally changing seasons and weather, there's plenty for the more ecologically-minded out there. And if you're after something to bash about, there are huge territorial invasions to keep your sword-arm busy.



Rise To Ryzom

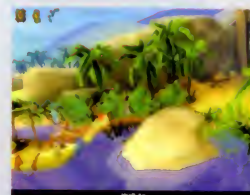
Follow these simple steps to get adventuring in the wonderful world of Atys

GETTING STARTED

Whack the DVD into your drive making sure that side two is facing upwards. Click on the MMO client section, find *The Saga Of Ryzom* and install. Once that's done, log onto secure.nevrax.com/payment_subscribe/?step=1, enter the code PCZONE2005 and you'll be given seven whole days to start enjoying the world of Atys. If you like it enough to continue, you'll even receive your first month's subscription for just £4.99. Bargain!

EXCLUSIVE!

THE BEST OF THE REST



ANKH

This demo sees you as an unfortunate tourist looking for some crocodiles. Once the ferryman's 'introduced' you to the waters of the Nile, you'll need to explore your surroundings in order to find the equipment you need. www.ankh-game.com



ASTERIX & OBELIX XXL2: MISSION LAS VEGUM

Featuring everyone's favourite two mustachioed Gauls, this demo has some beautifully animated platform action, various Gauls and Romans to rough up and some sly digs at the big names in gaming (*Tomb Raider*, *Tetris*, *Splinter Cell* etc).



VIVISECTOR: BEAST INSIDE

You can test your ingenuity before even starting the game by tackling the German installer on this demo. Once you've successfully navigated the German menus, you're rewarded with a FPS in which you can have gun fights with giant, armed animals. www.vivisector.com



DIPLOMACY

Strategy buffs everywhere will be more than happy with this chance to prove their intelligence in this demo of the classic board game. Conquer our continental unions through a sneaky turn-based combination of alliances, back-stabbing and supply centres. www.diplomacy-pcgame.com

STUBBS THE ZOMBIE

It's day of the dead in THQ's zombie-fest

www.stubbsthezombie.com | ETA: February 10

WE HOPE YOU skipped breakfast because you're about to be stuffed with nutritious scientist brains in this scrumptious demo of *Stubbs The Zombie In Rebel Without A Pulse*. Zombies have always had a bad reputation in games; if you're not blasting them with shotguns, you're setting them

EXCLUSIVE!

on fire and cutting them up into tiny pieces with a rusty chainsaw. In *Stubbs The Zombie*, it's time to take the side of the undead and inflict revenge on the oppressive living. Eat them all!

- 1 Scientists are obviously the bearers of melon-sized craniums and thus the most delicious brains. Smack them until they're stunned and then feast on their heads.
- 2 They're not very smart, but it's nice to have a few allies marching beside you. Make sure you stick with the crowd.
- 3 Being dead, Stubbs doesn't have the most forgiving of body odours. When things get tough, let one rip and watch those scientists drop.
- 4 You don't need them, so put your organs to good use. Gut Grenades are an explosive solution to all your human problems.

EATING GUIDE

Eat your way through *Stubbs*



Talk To The Hand

Use your nifty forearm to turn your gun-wielding foes against each other...



Possessive

With a quick twist of the wrist and a crafty throw, you'll be in control of those humans in no time. Try aiming for the cops to harness their awesome gun-toting powers.



Handy view

Stubbs' speedy digits are also useful for scouting ahead and investigating those nasty living folks. You don't want to stumble into a scientist-filled room unprepared.

GOLDENEYE: SOURCE

www.fileshack.com/file.x?fid=8170



The developer of this fantastic mod has taken the classic Nintendo 64 game *GoldenEye* and remade it in the glorious *Source* engine. Its first release missed our deadline by a mere whisker but you can expect our full verdict in the next issue.

WORLD RACING 2

www.fileshack.com/file.x?fid=8015 or 8206



We featured the first *World Racing 2* demo in our Christmas issue (Q&A) but soon after, developer Syntex took kept the ball rolling by releasing not just one, but two demos, proving itself to be either very bold or very productive. Probably the latter.

PCZONE
HOT
DOWNLOADS

SNIPPETS



THE TELIC CAMPAIGN

Alien Swarm is one of the most innovative *UT2004* mods around, so anything that adds to the experience gets our approval. An independent team have created *The Telic Campaign*, an unofficial expansion pack for the brilliant mod, and with a complete campaign in the form of eight new missions plus other goodies, *AS* fans should be over the moon. www.telic-campaign.com



QUAKEMAS MAP PACK

Those good chaps at id have spoiled us with three new multiplayer maps for *Quake 4*. *Railed* is set in an abandoned, rusting Strogg facility; *Tremors* is built within a twisting underground cavern and peppered with pipes, bridges and catwalks; while *Campgrounds Redux* is a modern take on the classic *Quake III* map. www.idsoftware.com

THE PEOPLE OF the Far East are famous for bringing to the world unique cultural gifts: kung fu, feng shui, sweet-and-sour chicken, SARS – their generosity knows no bounds.

BRAAAAINS, BRAAAAINS

Resident Evil Twilight stands out from the decaying crowd www.evilmod.de



UNTIL ONLY A short while ago, zombies were criminally under-represented on PC. With the exception of *Doom* of course, zombie lovers were forced to turn to console classics like *Resident Evil* for true survival horror action.

But recently, as is the nature of zombies, we've been overrun with hordes of the shambling undead: *Stubbs The Zombie* (p82), *Space Zombies (In Space)*,

Killing Floor, *They Hunger*, *No More Room In Hell*. Zombies truly are everywhere. *Resident Evil Twilight*, a *Half-Life 2* mod, looks particularly promising however – not only is it graphically amazing, it draws inspiration from arguably the best zombie series of all time. Head over to the website if you don't believe us and be afraid, be considerably afraid.



GIFTS FROM THE EAST

Koreans present us with a treasure trove of free games

www.gamengame.com

With the ingenuity of an academic fox, we've managed to track down website Game & Game, a Korean game service (in English, thankfully) which allows you to download a wealth of beta version games absolutely free of charge. It's not all dating sims and cartoon puzzle games either – there's plenty of action games (like online shooter *War Rock* or third-person dueller *GunZ*), as well as some MMORPGs (like top-down fantasy adventure *Sky Blade* or *Legend Of Mir 3*) to cater for our snobbish Western tastes. There's even a World War II flight sim starring anime characters – the Third Reich has never looked cuter.



By Order Of The King

King's Quest is remade in *The Silver Lining*

www.kqix.com

IF YOU'RE A fan of the old-school *King's Quest* series then it may be time to crank up the music, roll out the Doritos and party like a drunken mentalist. *The Silver Lining* isn't quite the true ninth sequel you've been waiting for, but as a freeware title that's been given the green light by VU Games, this is probably the closest you're ever going to get. The game is being developed by a large team of fans at Phoenix Online Studios, who have each surrendered their social lives and weekend binge-drinking to lovingly work away on it. Essentially a faithful adaptation of the adventuring and exploration featured in the original *King's Quest* games, it will be released in three parts. And who knows, the way it's shaping up, it might get a knighthood.



SPACE PIRATES

ZONE talks to Julian Young, leader of the ambitious *Half-Life 2* mod *Project Hull Breach*

www.hull-breach.com

PCZ: Can you give us a brief introduction to *Project Hull Breach*?

JY: *Project Hull Breach* is a science-fiction version of *America's Army*. The aim was to create a multiplayer, science-fiction FPS with a realism feel. There are no aliens; instead, *PHB* pits our own idea of Space Soldiers against a massive 'lost colony' of other humans; a militaristic tribal race known as the Senallin.

PCZ: Would it be fair to describe *PHB* as an open-source project?

JY: Almost. When we first started out, the idea was to create a community-based project where everything was freely available, from code to textures. Unfortunately, we found people started to take and use assets for their own projects and despite my best efforts we did eventually pull away, security measures were put in place and development went internal. The outcome, however, was a design put together by hundreds of people willing to give us their input, and a core team of interested, dedicated developers, both amateur and professional.

PCZ: What input have the community had in shaping the mod?

JY: Over a period of time, they've contributed in terms of art, game design, sound and music. We've managed to reach a good intermediate balance between input and development, and our developer blogs now keep the community informed and give us a chance for constructive feedback. Playtesting will play the most important role here.

PCZ: Does the project being community-driven create more problems?



JY: Plenty more. I've seen many mods that ignored the pleas of the community, but the realities of this hit home when we had to gauge how feasible their requests were. How much time and effort is required to implement each feature is extremely important, so for all our features, we now get a coder to develop a proof of concept to gauge if it will work, and how much time it will require to do properly.

PCZ: Just how much input have you had from professionals?

JY: We've had many professionals



on-board, but much as we'd like to, we can't name certain individuals or their companies for legal reasons. The ones we can mention are Avionix Records, Sean Beeson and Winifred Phillips, who've been responsible for all of our sound effects and mood music. On the voice-actor side, we also have Scott Sigler, the first person to release a book as a podcast (*Earthcore*); and Ken Boynton, who's done voices for more games than he can count (including *Halo*).

PCZ: What's your favourite feature in *Project Hull Breach*?

JY: Our helmets – I could run about opening and closing them all day. The helmet visor is your HUD, so without it you lose your crosshair, ammo counts, strategic information and communications. We've created a few ways of knocking out a player's suit, primarily EMP grenades that simply shut the electronics down.

PCZ: Can anybody apply for a position on the team?

JY: Absolutely, we're always on the lookout for more talent. Our current focus is to find a committed individual to manage our community and PR with a proven background in this area. We're also looking for environmental texture artists and coders. Send a covering letter and CV to jobs@hull-breach.com.

PCZ: How close are you to a public release now?

JY: Pretty damn close. We're reluctant to release an unfinished game, but we're considering releasing a weapons test release shortly to get more feedback. It's safe to say 2006.



IT'S YOUR DESTINY

Right about now, pointy-eared *Lineage II* fans should be happily cavoring in the *Chronicle 4: Scions Of Destiny* update. As the largest expansion for the Korean MMORPG yet, *Chronicle 4* will add new classes, enemies, skills, areas, pets, the ability to acquire items through fishing and the chance to battle a fire dragon! www.lineage2.com



ALIEN SKINS

Creator of out-of-this-world PCs, Alienware has now turned its hand to a bit of desktop design too. Four wallpapers will give your desktop a touch of class, and there are even custom icons and some futuristic-looking media-player skins too. Can't afford an Alienware system? Grab some of its style for free instead. shorterlink.com/75WVU46

Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH: NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED



The v1.3 patch fixes an issue with "the interior of the car sometimes disappearing during gameplay".

Movie of the Month DOD: SOURCE

With HDR lighting now firmly tucked under Valve's belt, it's moving on to even more impressive in-game effects. *Day Of Defeat: Source* will be the first recipient of some of these fancy touches, and you'll see more in future releases. Things like this...



DEPTH of field emulates focal distance. Objects in front and behind appear blurred.



MOTION blur emulates real blur from fast-moving objects, implying speed.



FILM grain is added to give that old-film look and simulate dust and scratches.



COLOUR correction change the mood of a scene by altering the palette.

MANA LIVE!

www.returntomana.org

Return To Mana adds some magic to *Half-Life 2*



THIS MOD SHOULD spark fond memories if you enjoyed the Super Nintendo classic *Secret Of Mana*. Yes, the guys behind *Return To Mana* have been beaver away on a fully-fledged unofficial sequel, utilising all the bells and whistles of the wonderful Source engine.

Set 43 years after a great war ravaged the world, an evil empire is building in the East and main protagonist Cyrus, complete with his merry band of heroes, must use the ancient powers of Mana to lay down some whoop-ass, wizard-style. The mod's looking nothing short of

stunning, featuring lush rolling hills, seemingly endless forests and violent rabbits with more rendered hair than your uncle's back.

In the gameplay department the project is equally impressive; the team plans to include an in-depth magic system, online co-op and a single-player campaign longer than any other *Half-Life 2* mod out there. Having been in production for a year and a half, the mod's already looking hugely impressive but once it's released, we'll be able to see if it really is magic or just a load of smoke and mirrors.



PRETTY toadstool thing.



PRETTY er, vegetation.



PRETTY waterfalls.

Barney's New Job

Half-Life remade in *Black Mesa: Source* www.blackmesasource.com

WHEN HALF-LIFE was ported into the new Source engine, a lot of people thought that Valve had missed a trick because the new format wasn't used to give the game a shot in the arm. The idea behind *Black Mesa: Source* is to correct that anomaly and give the much-loved original the benefit of the tweaks and improvements that Source can offer, as well as enhancing areas of gameplay that *Half-Life* couldn't exploit at the time it was developed. It is, after all, seven years old now.

The updated features include new models, enhanced poly counts, overhauled and enhanced environments for both original and deathmatch maps, new sounds and improved textures. It's like when Volkswagen took the Golf, slapped on some new body panels and called it the Audi TT: same proven



"MIND out, I don't want to get my tights wet."

structure and plumbing we all love, but dressed up in funky new pyjamas.

So far, *BMS* sounds fantastic, but there are more treats to enjoy. There'll be enhanced AI so your enemies can track you more effectively, and a co-op mode too. And how about a beefed-up multiplayer mode to re-create the



SHE'S got a right mouth on her that one.

buzz of *Half-Life* Deathmatch, but even more adrenalin-pumped than ever? Well, you've got it. Could this revitalised *Half-Life* rediscover its popularity of old?

BUDGET FILM-MAKING MAGIC

www.bloodspell.com
www.strangecompany.org

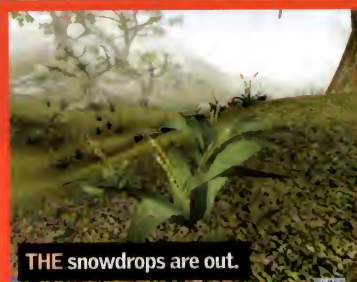
BloodSpell machinima aims for January release

BLOODSPELL IS THE latest machinima (for the uninitiated that's film-making using game engines) from Strange Company, but this one's a bit different. For a start, it's feature length, and while there are some great shorts out there – and even a music video or two – we can't think of many that represent such a huge commitment to the genre.

The storyline is a tale of blood, magic and survival (check out the trailer on Strange Company's website), and it's perfectly suited to the *Neverwinter Nights* game engine used. The film is being released in 14 small episodes, hopefully starting in January 2006, and it's free to download and modify too. Keep an eye out for it on our DVD.



ADAM and the Ants are down to two band members these days.



Morrowind Makeover

Vibrant Morrowind makes textures sparkle

www.elderscrolls.com/forums/

THE ELDER SCROLLS: MORROWIND is getting old, but rather than having to drag the elderly mutt outside, hold back the tears and pop one in the back of her head with our trusty rifle, the mod community has swooped in to save the day with this trusty texture pack. Aptly titled *Vibrant Morrowind*, the pack is literally like rubbing the crap out of



your eyes and embracing a world of clear eyesight, where virtually every texture has been replaced, giving every bottle, plant, building and fabric a bit of extra sparkle. Expect the full v3.0 pack some time after March.



STEAM'S LATEST FREEBIES

Grab 'em before they evaporate...

www.steampowered.com

COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE is at last getting updated player models and the long-awaited *cs_militia* map. This news was greeted with a mixture of joy and disbelief at the Steam forums, as you might imagine...

Retro-weirdo *Darwinia* might look like something the Commodore Amiga spewed up a decade ago, but we like it and the demo's now available through Steam. You can buy it too, which is nice.

Day Of Defeat: Source has some new maps which will keep this classy former mod up with the best, and *Fortress Forever* – a remake of *TFC* for Source – is edging ever closer. No beta yet, but watch this space.

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A...

Games Programmer



NAME Alan Roberts

WORKING ON

TOCA Race Driver 3

AGE 25

EXPERIENCE Four

years on previous

TOCA incarnations

PCZ How did you get started?

AR I started coding at home. Games were always what I was interested in, so I focused on computing-related subjects – and when Codemasters visited my university in the final year of my degree, I decided to apply.

PCZ What's the pay like?

AR The pay varies with skill and experience. There are also benefits, such as bonuses, pension contributions, private health care, and, bizarrely, on-site massage.

PCZ What does your job involve?

AR As lead programmer, I'm responsible for organising and scheduling the programming side of a project, from the design and planning phase all the way to the submissions at the end. This means maintaining a close working relationship with my team of programmers, the design and art teams, other departments within the company such as marketing and QA, and external organisations that provide support for our project.

PCZ How rewarding is your job?

AR It's very rewarding to see people enjoying playing what we've worked so hard to achieve.

PCZ What's the most annoying part of the job?

AR If you think having to play games at work is annoying then that could be it. But I love it.

WE SAY... DIY

If possible, try to get a good academic background in the subject. Otherwise, experience is key, so crack open those C++ books and get stuck in. Produce a portfolio of demonstrations of your work that you can show to prospective employers.



Freeware



Steve Hogarty is free and easy. Tell us something we didn't know...

Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the Net has to offer, be it freeware, homebrews, remakes, webgames or emulation – you'll never have to buy another game again. This month we go back in time, head to the skies, go to the arcade and visit Ramsay Street. Not all at once though.

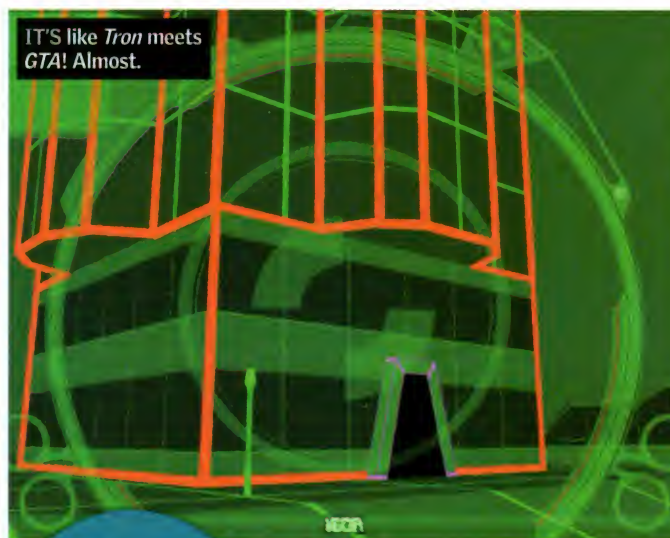


DISMOUNT GAMES

Making road accidents fun again

Developer: Jetro Lauha
jet.ro/dismount

The set of *Dismount* games offer you this: pushing a ragdoll man down a flight of stairs with the intention of causing him as much harm as possible; placing the man in the most fatal car crash possible; or dragging the man through a variety of obstacle courses, grabbing rewards along the way. While you could view these games as metaphors for life, it's easier to see them as insanely addictive ragdoll playthings, especially the *Truck Dismount*, in which you launch the man over a wall. Then see how far over the wall you can get him. Then get him to land on top of the wall and not fall off. Just like real life.



CHOLO

Get ready for some digital love

Developer: Ovine | cholo.ovine.net

THE ORIGINAL CHOLO was released around 1987, coinciding roughly with Aretha Franklin becoming the first woman to be inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, hurricane-force winds killing 23 people in southern England and US president Ronald Reagan undergoing prostate surgery. But as far as games go, *Cholo's* as old as the hills.

Sporting cutting-edge wireframe graphics from an era when putting '3D!!' on the box was a selling point, *Cholo* was a game which put you in control of a small robot called RAT. This robot, in all its 64K glory, could whizz about a

huge, free-roaming world (in your face Rockstar), interface with computers (take that *Doom 3*), hack into the minds of better, more advanced robots and enhance itself with upgrades and modifications (eat your heart out *Deus Ex*).

So now, through the wonders of modern science, *Cholo* has been remade in its entirety. The wireframe graphics have been replaced by neon lighting strips and spandex leotards, and the number of available robo-enhancements has been upped. What's really impressive though, is just how retro this manages to feel – not having a clue what's going on when you first start playing, being totally bewildered and having to push random keys until something happens, being humbled by the scope of the environment, working really hard for minimal reward, this is classic PC gaming.

The first time you come across the impressive robots (like the tank-bots) and realise that with enough effort

you could commandeer their mechanical minds is a special moment, and something you don't see enough of. A mix of *GTA*-style roaming and *Deus Ex*-style hacking, *Cholo's* probably the best thing to come out of 1987 since well, me. And Reagan's prostate.



CLOUD

Climb in the back with your head in the clouds and you're gone

Developer: USC Interactive Media Division students | www.thatcloudgame.com

HAVE YOU EVER wanted to fly among the clouds? To see the sky only where birds soar? Welcome to a dream of what could be. Welcome to *Cloud*. Welcome to a load of pretentious pseudo-poetic bollocks more like.

Ignore the irritating dialogue though, because *Cloud* is actually a fun game which sees you, a flying mental patient, collecting white clouds and using them to fight dark clouds. Not really a puzzler and not really a strategy game, *Cloud* falls somewhere in between while still managing to be neither. Brilliantly designed with great artwork and chunky, pleasant visuals, the game emits a bizarre charm which keeps you playing, despite the lame and arbitrary phrases like: "I like to sleep in on rainy days, don't you?"

Personal objections aside, this game is a relaxing and gentle distraction, with simple objectives, simple controls and clean, bright presentation. Collecting the puffy white clouds, piling them on top of one another and arranging them in different shapes (or attacking the 'evil' dark clouds to create rain and lightning, which I must stress is scientifically incorrect) is a compelling, if largely pointless incentive. The appeal doesn't

last too long though, and you'll soon find yourself bored with clouds, shapes and rain, instead preferring to sit indoors with your eyes closed.

While it lasts, *Cloud* is an interesting experience which smells faintly of a GreenPeace activist, ultimately having good intentions but still being mostly useless.



WEBGAME OF THE MONTH

Harold Bishop: The Lost Years



www.bbc.co.uk/drama/neighbours/games/lostyears.shtml

"Let me just ask my husband... He was there a moment ago." "That swell can be dangerous..." "Oh don't be silly, he's here somewhere..." Harold? Harold! Where are you?! HAROOOLD?!" But it was too late. Madge's screams went unheard. Harold had been plucked from the slippery rocks and dragged into the frothy deluge, leaving nothing but his spectacles and a distraught Madge behind, screaming his name with that croaky voice of hers.

I still get a lump in my throat thinking about that episode of *Neighbours* where Harold Bishop fell into the sea, and my brain still swirls with notions of where Harold went in the subsequent five years following his disappearance. They said he was presumed dead, but when he arrived on Ramsay Street calling himself Tim (or Ted or something), a Pandora's box of mystery was opened. With this webgame, you can fill in the blanks in Harold's memory and if you're good enough, Harold Bishop himself will call you and have a chat about tubas and the Salvation Army. Honest, we can't make this stuff up

NEOCRON ARCADE - THE N.M.E. PROJECT

Not willing to fork out several pounds? Try this...

Developer: CDV | ng.neocron.com/index.php?id=105

'SEVERAL' IS ONE of those words that loses meaning the more you say it. I was trying to figure out how many 'several' actually is, when suddenly the word just stopped making any sense. As such, *Neocron Arcade* has 'several' chapters, which means four, and I'm not going to contest that. A top-down arcade shooter based in the *Neocron* universe (you know, that not-so-hot sci-fi RPG), it sees you running about several 2D landscapes killing several mutants, spiders and mutant-spiders in an attempt to confront a personal nemesis and generally save the day.

It's as pointless as they come, with the several chapters all panning out identically, save the addition of several other weapons and several different shades of greeny-brown. The several enemies don't extend beyond the aforementioned spiders and mutants, save several bosses.

Besides the several bosses, you're treated to several cut-scenes with several terrible lines of dialogue. You'll have a several amount of mindless fun before you reach the several end though, which is only several minutes from the beginning anyway. Several.



FREEPLAYPLAY!

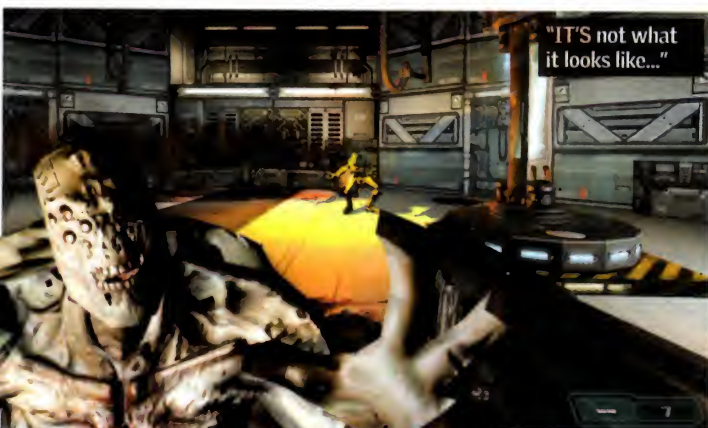


CLASSIC DOOM



Doom, Doom, Doom, Steve Hogarty says way-ohh...

cdoom.d3files.com



CZECHOSLOVAKIA divided! Tuberculosis a global emergency!

Domino's Pizza abolishes the 30-minute guarantee on pizza delivery! It can only mean one thing – why, it must be 1993! If this was one of those *I Heart 1993* shows, you'd have Take That playing and Jeremy Clarkson or someone moaning about how you can't get a good coffee anywhere, and the cost of bloody petrol for an E-Type Jag. Instead, we're going to wax nostalgic about *Classic Doom*, a mod which aims to take all of the goodness

of the original *Doom* and pump it into *Doom 3* intravenously.

To sum it up analogically, they've found a vein. From the 'proper' running speeds to the original's fantastic maps, gameplay elements have been lifted from the classic FPS and carefully slotted into *Doom 3*'s beautiful surroundings. The mod takes the first chapter of *Doom* (that's Knee-Deep In The Dead) and faithfully renders each level in the high-detail metallic sheen of id's latest graphics engine. Literally everything is spot-on in terms of accuracy – marines are where you expect them to be, secret doors are where you last left them, imps' fireballs travel in straight lines instead of arcing, exploding green barrels are present and accounted for – you'll immediately remember where the red key is and where to go to get the mega armour pickups. Hell (pun intended), the modding team have even added their own cut-scenes, showing the experiments on Phobos going wrong and the UAC squad being called out to help. The voice-acting isn't too bad either, on a par with the likes of popular machinima series *Red Vs Blue* (meaning it's as good as you can expect from a small

team of America modders). The accuracy even extends as far as a convincingly *Doom*-esque title screen and 'Hurt Me Plenty' difficulty levels.

All that's missing is your face at the bottom of the screen, getting more bloody and battered as your health begins to dwindle. Other than that, and the fact that it's only the first chapter on offer here, *Classic Doom* is a fantastic achievement and one that will make fans of the original *Doom* go teary-eyed with nerdy joy. It's run and it's gun, no gimmicks, no tricks, the enemies just get bigger and the guns just get louder. Isn't that all that really matters?



UT2004 MEGA PACK



Andy Robinson is up to his neck in new maps

www.unrealtournament.com

THOSE GENEROUS FELLOWS over at Epic Games are spoiling you again with the *UT2004 Mega Pack*, an update so chock-full of new maps that you'll be fragging noobs until the wee hours.

There are nine maps to be exact, of the Assault, Deathmatch and Capture The Flag variety. In addition to your bog-standard weapons research facilities and secret bases, one of the Assault maps features an Australian brewery, which you and your merry band of deathmatchers must infiltrate to stop the production of non-alcoholic beer – certainly our idea of a morally felicitous crusade. In fact, all the Assault maps are produced with the love you'd expect from full-priced content – but they're free.

Thrust, for example, takes place in a gigantic missile launch facility, and tasks players with mischievously mislaunching a rocket into enemy waters. JumpShip is

another design triumph which thrusts you into a gigantic space battle to apprehend a prototype spaceship. After blasting everyone out of the stars, you're predictably tasked with infiltrating the ship and then hijacking it all the way to galactic Mexico. These new maps add a fresh dose of fun to *UT2004*, proving that there's life in the old dog yet.

**PLAY:
ADD-ON**



STAR WARS SPRING

Andy Robinson goes all seasonal spring.clan-sy.com/

THERE'S ONLY ONE thing cooler than stormtroopers: free stormtroopers, and this *TA Spring* mod has lots of them, in a large number of varieties. *Star Wars Spring* is the anticipated port of the much-loved mod for *Total Annihilation* over to the *TA Spring* engine, which is available for you to download and play for

absolutely nowt. The mod features over 130 units from the *Star Wars* universe, including an army of wookiees ready to follow your bidding.

Being free, *Star Wars Spring* is a bit rough around the edges. Starting a game, for example, requires the skill of a crack computer programmer, along with some

sort of Antarctic navigator to manage the aggressive menu system. But once you accidentally stumble into the game, you've got a no-holds-barred strategy title at your disposal, which could well entice you to spend all of your free time hunting down rebel scum. It might look a bit rough but don't complain – it's free.

PCZONE TOP 5 CALL OF DUTY MODS



1 REVOLT

This present-day combat mod brings *Call Of Duty* bang up-to-date with modern-day weapons, teams and maps.

2 HEAT OF BATTLE

Meld realism with capture and hold objectives with this multiplayer mod, which puts the emphasis on teamwork.

3 GERMAN FRONT

Fancy seeing the war unfold from the other side? This mod takes the rare step of letting you play as one of 'ze Germans'.

4 SWAT

If you didn't get a copy of Irrational's brilliant squad shooter, this mod's the next best thing with its share of body armour, flashbangs and bad guys.

5 MERCILESS BLOOD

One for the bloodthirsty, this mod focuses on realistic damage, making for some blood-soaked battles. Watch out for head shots!

DAY HARD

Suzy Wallace finds that old habits *Day Hard*

www.smanu85.it/public/site_inside/dayhard/home.php?pag=home



LIKE THE participants on *Takeshi's Castle*, most games take themselves far too seriously. Now that's all well and good when recreating the horrors of WWII in a shooter, but the great thing about our favoured form of entertainment is that it doesn't have to make complete sense. *Day Hard* is a perfect example. Filled with a hearty combination of larger-than-life

characters (including Jack Carver from *Far Cry*), humorous scripted sequences and some surprisingly professional voice-overs, it sticks two fingers up at those mods that are anally obsessed with correctly modelling trajectories and getting the right calibre ammunition.

Playing as Morgan Freeman (Gordon's lesser-known brother, not the

actor), you make your way through a variety of settings, ranging from escaping your apartment block when the Combine come visiting to taking part in an Undying tribute in a hotel.

The focus is firmly on fun rather than realism and while it does provide this in doses, the mod suffers in places from some mediocre mapping and convoluted design that often finds you completely stuck with no idea as to where you're meant to be heading next.

While the humour might not have you rolling around the floor in hysterics, the quirky set-pieces and characters provide some welcome light-hearted relief from the more serious mods littering the scene, so if you can look past its flaws then welcome to the party.



PC gaming's favourite monk returns.

CLASSIC: MOD



SVEN CO-OP

What friends are really for

www.svencoop.com

IT'S RARE that a mod receives so much attention, but when it improves upon one of the best PC games ever created, you can see why it's deserved. *Sven Co-op* took *Half-Life* and added what is perhaps the best and most underused gameplay mode ever: Co-op. Roping your mates into helping you, you could either blast away the *Half-Life* nasties in masses of excellent custom maps or relive Gordon's first adventures by replaying the original maps. Multiple updates over the years added better player models and animations, Steam support, new monsters and weapons and improved physics. And with a *Half-Life 2* version in the pipeline, this is one mod that no-one should be without. Because we all need a little help from our friends.

COMBINE DESTINY

Your destiny awaits cd.bounced.de

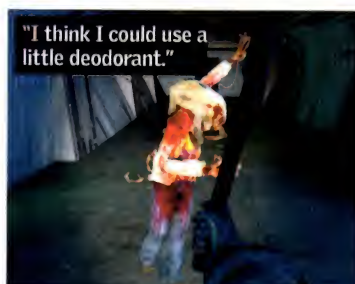
PLAY: MOD

OPPOSING FORCE WAS a great expansion pack. Not only did it expand on the sheer hyperbolic brilliance of *Half-Life*, but it added an entirely new dimension to the *Half-Life* universe by allowing you to play as one of the marines sent to Black

Mesa to clean up and neutralise the scientists, the aliens and of course, Gordon Freeman. It was great because it put you in the boots of the enemy, and while you weren't really a baddie, it felt good to play on the other side of the fence for a bit.

Combine Destiny attempts the same with *Half-Life 2*, putting you in the position of a Combine soldier tasked with cleaning up a town after it's been bombarded with headcrab missiles. With entirely original levels, a cohesive storyline and some

interesting set-pieces, *Combine Destiny* does its best to let you experience life from behind that scary gas mask. It's not a re-telling of Gordon's tale however, and it doesn't possess the clever storytelling methods of *Opposing Force*, but it's still a great addition to the *Half-Life* universe and one worth playing.



WIN!

FREEPLAY COMPETITION



A top of the range gaming laptop!

A Dell Inspiron XPS M170 gaming notebook plus copies of *RF Online* up for grabs



WORTH OVER
£1,500!

LORKS-A-LORDY! How about this for a dream prize? Forget that colossal grey, PC box sitting under your IKEA computer desk – thanks to the overly-generous people at Codemasters, we're giving one lucky *PC ZONE* reader the opportunity to be the envy of all his (or her) friends and enemies by walking away with a Dell Inspiron XPS laptop and a copy of the corking MMOG *RF Online* (see p28)! We also have a further five copies of *RF Online* to give away as runner-up prizes.

The Dell XPS M170 (to give the saucy minx its full title) is crammed with some of the very latest silicon wotsits and graphics technology to help you handle the beefiest of PC games with ease – especially the NVIDIA 256MB GeForce Go 6800 Ultra graphics card,

whose outstanding performance will let you get the very best from the fantastic *RF Online*. The notebook's stylish design has a brushed gun-metal finish, configurable perimeter lighting and a customisable personalisation panel to give your laptop PC games that oh-so-individual touch.

RF Online, meanwhile, is Codemasters' flagship fantasy MMOG, a huge, sprawling sci-fi action epic that already has over a million players in the Far East. Set in a galaxy called Novus, you can choose from three warring factions – sexy space elves, non-sexy space gnomes and a force of clonking robots. Check out page 28 for more details, the movies on our DVD and the official website at www.rf-onlinegame.com.

So, you wanna win? Of course you blimmin' well do, so what are you waiting for? Get off your arse and answer the following *RF Online*-related conundrum...

Which of the following is **NOT** a faction in *RF Online*?

- (a) The Cora Holy Alliance
- (b) The Bellato Union
- (c) The Brittias Empire

Send your entries on a postcard or the back of an envelope to *RF Online* competition, *PC ZONE*, Future Publishing, 1 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NA. Make sure that you get your entries to us by Wed, March 1. Any received after this date will be shredded and used as confetti at a gay wedding.

DELL INSPIRON XPS M170

Specs:

- Intel® Pentium® M 770 (2.13GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 533MHz FSB)
- Windows® XP Home Edition, SP2
- 1,024MB 533MHz DDR2 SDRAM (2x512)
- 80GB (5,400rpm) IDE hard drive
- 17-inch UltraSharp™ widescreen WUXGA (1,920 x 1,200) display with TrueLife
- 256MB NVIDIA GeForce Go 6800 Ultra graphics card

Fight Club

We're back. For another beating...



ZONE CHAT



Your chance to chat with legends...
Or us if they don't show up

**READ
THE FULL
TRANSCRIPT AT**
WWW.ZONEGAMES.CO.UK/

OUR LAST ZONE Chat was perhaps the saddest to date, as *PC ZONE* legend Paul 'Prezzer' Presley announced his retirement as a full-time staff member on *PC ZONE*. Having served the magazine since issue two, it was little surprise that many of you were unable to continue chatting as your keyboards were short-circuited by a deluge of tears. But fear not, because you haven't seen the last of Prezzer. Let the rejoicing begin!

Inevitably, this month's *ZONE* Chat will be rife with rumours and speculation about who'll be the next member of *PC ZONE*. A new face? A return of an old face? A return of an old face who's had plastic surgery and is now unrecognisable? Who knows. So if you don't want to miss the latest goss, make sure you put the date of Wednesday, February 8 in your diary – see you there from 5pm onwards.

**COME AND
TAKE ON THE
ZONE STAFF IN
OUR MONTHLY
ONLINE GAMING
FREE-FOR-ALL!**

YES, YOU READ that right, the now-legendary *PC ZONE* Fight Club is back. Having given you a month off to heal and have some new teeth fitted, you're no doubt all fired up for some more hardcore fragging action.

To cast off those winter blues, we welcome back old favourite *Counter-Strike: Source*, a game that we've been spanked on regularly in the past. However, with the arrival of a new year comes a new resolve: that we, the members of *PC ZONE*, will not be beaten again by anyone... Ever! Want to know whether we manage to honour our resolution? Then jump onto www.zonegames.co.uk on Thursday, February 9 from 6pm. If you have the guts...



PREZZER: looks pleased with himself doesn't he?

How to join in!



Having been in hibernation for the past couple of months, *ZONE* Chat has risen like a phoenix that's been sucked into a the engines of a passing Jumbo Jet. If you fancy jumping on and having your say, then you'll need an IRC program and a Net connection. We recommend mIRC and you can find it on side two of our DVD. Just install the program, set the options, devise an online identity that'll make you stand out from the crowd, connect to a Quakenet server nearest to you, type /join #pcz into the command line, and hey presto, you're there! Chatting with the friendliest bunch of online readers you could hope to find. Remember, play nice and don't be rude.

Can't make Fight Club?

Washing your hair that night? Worry not, we have the following public servers running 24/7, so drop in any time you feel like taking on a fellow *PCZ* reader – you may even catch the *ZONE* staff in there too. As always, you can find up-to-the-minute server information at www.zonegames.co.uk!

WHO'S WHO

Jamie Sefton PCZ_NorthernScum
Will Porter PCZ_Batsphinx
Suzy Wallace PCZ_Uzibat
Steve Hogarty PCZ_escaped_monkey
Andy Robinson PCZ_EssexHoodlum
Phil Wand PCZ_People's Front Of Judea

1 SWAT 4
swat4.zonegames.co.uk

2 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE
cs1.zonegames.co.uk:27015
cs2.zonegames.co.uk:27025
cs3.zonegames.co.uk:27015

3 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH
hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065

4 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE
dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085

**5 BATTLEFIELD 1942
DC MODDED**
dc.zonegames.co.uk:14567

6 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC
tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045

**7 WOLFENSTEIN:
ENEMY TERRITORY**
et.zonegames.co.uk:27960

**8 UNREAL
TOURNAMENT 2004**
ut1.zonegames.co.uk:7777
ut2.zonegames.co.uk:8888

9 CALL OF DUTY
cod.zonegames.co.uk:28960

**10 JOINT OPERATIONS:
TYPHOON RISING**
Listed on NovaWorld

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"A Killer System" 89% PC Gamer Dec 05

Pyro 64 - SLI

"Guaranteed to fly" 88% PC Gamer Aug 05

"Fastest thing we've tested" 86% PC Zone Jul 05



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“AS CLOSE TO WAR
AS YOU’D EVER
WANT TO GET.” *— Official Xbox Magazine*





SEQUEL TO THE GAME OF THE YEAR

CALL OF DUTY[®] 2 ★★

Infinity Ward returns with more cinematic intensity and chaos than ever before, in World War II's most climactic battles. Join your squad and choose your single-player missions, or go online for intense multiplayer action.

WWW.CALLOFDUTY.COM



PC
DVD
ROM



XBOX 360



Mobile version
also available on



ACTIVISION[®]

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activision.com



Survive in Call Of Duty 2

Andy Robinson runs you through the trenches

WAR ISN'T EASY: one wrong move and you could find yourself splattered against the brickwork of a small French cottage. To make it through *Call Of Duty 2* alive, you need to muster all of your courage, down a strong espresso coffee and brave the smoky, bullet-laden battlefields with the reflexes of a warrior. Thank Stalin then,

that we're here to help you fight against the Nazi horde and win in style with a distinctive pelvic thrust. The only thing you'll have to remember in addition to the below is to make sure that you always keep an eye on your ammunition. Oh, and that you only shoot the guys with the swastikas on them...

Need:

A copy of *Call Of Duty 2*
A sturdy helmet
Knowledge of the Russian language

What you'll get:

Lots of medals ✓
Praise and glory ✓
Blown up ✗
Syphilis ✗



01 Run For Cover

Call Of Duty 2 features a totally new health system from the previous game, which automatically recharges when you leave the firefight to take some time out to recover. For goodness sake, when the screen goes red and you can hear your heart attempting to burst from your chest in desperation, run for cover. You can only take so many MG42 rounds from the hun before you're punished with a death screen and a quote from Winston Churchill.

TOLD you banning smoking in pubs was a bad idea.



02 FACTUALLY INACCURATE

Despite what the scriptwriters behind the game would have you believe, the word 'wanker' was not actually used in World War II – but we have it on good authority that people did masturbate. The word is occasionally spouted by one of the strapping Brit soldiers in the game, sparking much debate in the *PC ZONE* office as to its historical accuracy. It's a widely used word in both Britain and Australia, most commonly heard when Sefton is playing *Pro Evo 5*.

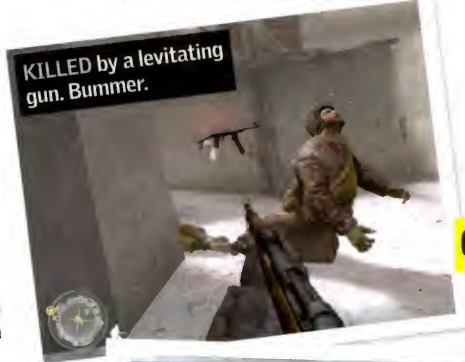
03 SMOKING IS GOOD FOR YOU

Machine-gun nests are a one-way highway straight to deathville. To avoid having your face re-arranged by a barrage of lead, throw one of your handy smoke grenades in the path of said gunner and as well as being treated to a marvellous visual display of particle effects, your enemy will be able to see bugger all. Smoke grenades are also a useful tool for making low-spec PCs crash in online games – upgrade now or feel the consequences.



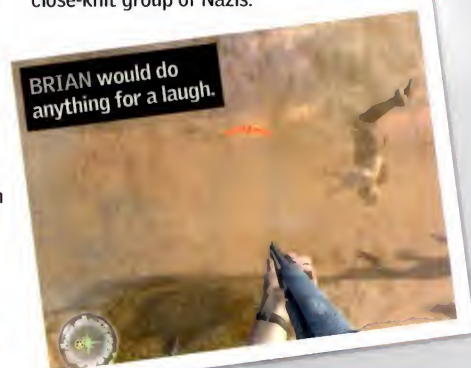
04 Never Eat Shredded Wheat

See that big spinny thing in the bottom-left corner? That's the compass. If you're particularly sharp-eyed, you'll have noticed that it displays where your objectives are. However, what you might not know is that it also displays the locations of spotted enemies when either you or a squad member discovers their location. This is handy when you have absolutely no clue where you're getting shot from.



05 DON'T BLOW UP

60 per cent of deaths in *Call Of Duty 2* are caused by stray grenades, so it's extra important to pay attention when they're being thrown at you. Perhaps the most obvious of military tactics, but when you see a grenade icon with an arrow in the middle of the screen, leg it. In confined spaces, grenades can be especially lethal: try to avoid using them in sprawling outdoor environments unless you stumble upon a close-knit group of Nazis.



06 GUN TACTICS

There are two types of men out there: a sub-machine gun man and a rifle man. While rifle men are clearly superior, some people like to run around like a crazed leprechaun, rapidly shooting enemies in a lethal marathon. We advise that you adjust your play style according to which weapon you're armed with; if you have a rifle, you're going to be cautious and accurate, while machine guns are more suited to the run-and-gun strategy.



07

LEAN, MEAN FIGHTING MACHINE

One of the most overlooked features of *Call Of Duty 2* and FPS games in general is the lean function, which you can use to pop your head around a corner to check for any suspecting Germans who may be packing heat in the vicinity. The lean function is also useful for performing your own theatrical dance numbers for your teammates in online games.

08 STRIKE A POSE

Setting the correct posture for the right situation can make the difference between a glorious victory and a harsh death at the wrong end of a Nazi bayonet. The crouched posture is a good choice during heated battles when plenty of crossfire is flying over your head, while budding snipers are advised to lay prone on the ground for optimum accuracy and concealment.



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HOW TO...

Make a game

PART SEVEN

Dan Marshall gets advice from a gaming legend...

FOR YEARS, *PC ZONE* has been rating and slating the very best (and worst) the games industry has to offer. Before I finish up the code for my own game, *Gibbage*, and submit it to *ZONE* for ritual humiliation, I need to make sure it's in tip-top shape. As an indie developer with zero budget to spend on testing, I've turned to my friends and family to act as playtesters, and hacked into Sefton's address book to see if I can get a point of view from someone in the know.

Like any self-respecting PC gamer, I'm fully aware that *The Secret Of Monkey Island* is, without doubt, The Greatest PC Game Ever™. Who else could I turn to then, than Ron Gilbert – champion of innovation through his Grumpy Gamer website and personal hero of mine? There's no-one's opinion I'd relish more than his – what this man says about *Gibbage* will either make or break my resolve to become a full-time developer. What if he were to say: "Get out of here, kid, you've got no future?" I mean, I just don't think I could handle that kind of rejection, you know?

After sending an excited email to see if he'd play *Gibbage*, I'm left drumming my fingers awaiting a response. Curse Americans and their irregular time zone shenanigans.

BE GENTLE WITH ME

Suddenly, in the dead of night, something arrives: "Sure. Sounds like fun," he says. "Do your feelings get hurt easily?" Uh oh. As a matter of fact, they do. And I'm just becoming aware of what I've let myself in for. Thus far, any critique of *Gibbage* from friends or family has been retorted with a razor-like, "Twat off, you twat!" (my mother included), then me storming off in a huff for days on end. I've usually consoled myself by thinking, "Hah! What do they know about writing games?" But this is somewhat different. This man conceived SCUMM. Gulp.

Ron's report nearly made me cry. He started with the controls, which he felt were "very cumbersome and added a lot of frustration to my first-play experience".

Ron continued: "The game has a very frantic pace and feel to it, which isn't a bad thing at all, but in the early levels, it needs

Is it any good?

The Girlfriend

"I should hate *Gibbage* the most out of everyone. It's stolen my boyfriend away from me for days on end, and I've been subjected to countless 'gripping' conversations over a pub table about weapon balancing and double-buffering. I have no idea what these are.

"But I have to admit, it's really rather good. I don't play games, but I'm usually the first to suggest a bout of *Gibbage* when there's nothing on telly or there's an argument that needs settling. That said, I'm looking forward to the game being finished so I can have my boyfriend back. And so he can take me out to dinner when he starts selling it. Buy a copy. I'm hungry."

My Mother

"I don't really understand what's going on, there are too many buttons in front of me. But it looks very nice and is extremely professional. Does it need to have so much blood and violence? There's an awful lot of shooting. Can you take that out? (No, mum – Dan.)"

to be slowed down to give me a chance to figure out how to play.

Also, I got too frustrated on the tutorial level because I kept dying. You should not be able to die on a tutorial level – that's a place to play at your own pace. Even on the first two levels, I'd make it damn near impossible to lose. Nothing will turn people off faster than losing too quickly."

Three lines of code later, and Ron's niggles are a thing of the past. I'm starting to think this was a very, very good idea...

"I'd like some back story,"

he added. "Something interesting is going on there, but I don't know what it is. Even a simple Title Screen (maybe comic-book-style) would help me understand what I was doing and why I was there." And the graphics? "The simplistic art style has a nice charm to it, but it could use some refining. It's a little too flat, without being stylised."

His closing comments made my heart glow all warm and fuzzy. Remember, this is from the guy credited with inventing Insult Swordfighting: "Overall, I think the game shows some promise. I'm very intrigued by the theme you have going. It's a bizarre little world, but I want to know more about it."

Invaluable advice, then, from a man who knows how to make a legendary game. It seems I've got some work ahead of me before I release *Gibbage*, but I'm extremely encouraged by the positive feedback I've been getting from my playtesters thus far. I'll never complain about a slipping release date ever again – I see now that it's because no matter how perfectly finished you think a game is, there's always something that needs a tinker and a polish. One thing's for sure – when *Gibbage* is finally done and dusted, you'll read about it first in *PC ZONE* (lucky you)...

If you played the demo on the *ZONE* DVD, I'd love to hear what you think: dan@gibbage.co.uk



THE inevitable slippery-slidey ice level.



THE first club in a videogame that isn't depressingly devoid of patrons? I think so...



I had a robot factory level before I heard UT2007 had one. Honest!



ON the Bog.



If you want more...

www.indiegamer.com

Where we proper indies hang out and slag off multi-million dollar productions.

www.gibbage.co.uk

Where all the info on *Gibbage* will be – once I learn how to write websites too. Sigh...

encomremusic.dmusic.com/

My composer's portfolio – if you're an indie developer, I highly recommend him.

abandonware



Kosta Krauth's monthly focus on abandonware games and utilities

What is abandonware?

Abandonware is computer software that's no longer being sold or supported by its copyright holder, such as the classic sci-fi RPG shooter *System Shock 2*. However, game copyright is protected by law for 70 years, so even though you can't buy these games, downloading them is technically illegal. *PC ZONE* doesn't condone filthy criminal's. Or even ones that have had a good scrub.

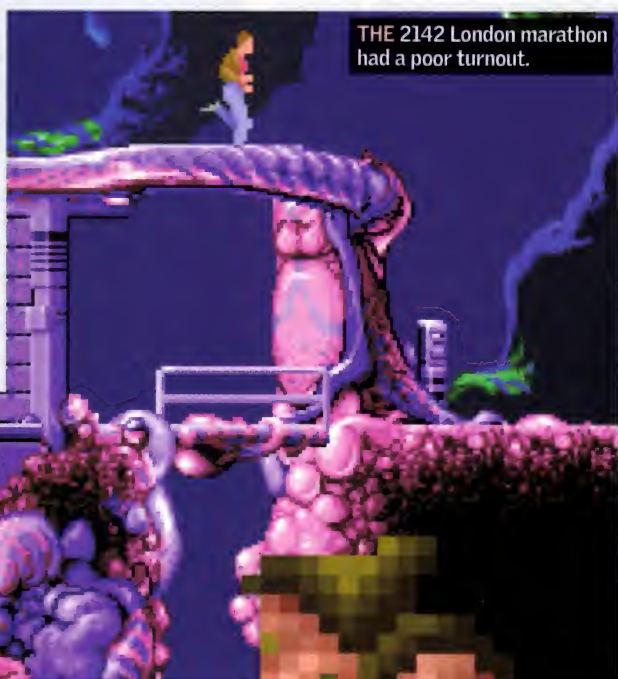
ANOTHER MONTH, another hint on getting your old PC games working with DOS emulator DOSBox (on the DVD). If you still have a copy of your favourite oldie on a CD-ROM, or if you have a CD image of it, DOSBox can help you

out. You can access your CD drive by simply typing `mount d f:\ -t cdrom`, where d is the letter you want to access the drive within DOSBox, and f responds to the real CD drive in your computer. On the other hand, if you have an ISO image of the CD, you can

mount it as a virtual drive by typing `imgmount d c:\myiso.iso -t iso`.



**ABANDONWARE
GAME
OF THE
MONTH**



RULE 427 of the driver's code: look where you're going.

Flashback

DEVELOPER Delphine YEAR OF RELEASE 1992



Flashback is an action-packed game noir backed by a script that would make *Blade Runner* look like a cheerful chick-flick. Playing as a scientist with a bad case of amnesia, the game immerses you in a bleak, futuristic world where the then cutting-edge graphics brought games and movies closer together than ever before.

Back in the early '90s when *Flashback* was released, it was no surprise that it quickly became a big hit. The roto-scoped 2D graphics were a first for the time, and French developer Delphine Software used real-life actors to create fluid animations and worlds that, if you squinted really hard, looked a bit like movie sets. Like

bemused crows oogling at shiny pennies, both the press and public quickly lapped up *Flashback*.

It isn't all about flashy pixels and spites though; underneath *Flashback's* attractive exterior lies one of the greatest platform games ever to grace the PC. The controls are especially marvellous, with the smooth animation making *Flashback's* protagonist a real joy to play. Like a Lara Croft of the dark ages, you can easily wind your hero into a barrel-roll, draw your weapon and fire away at any unsuspecting mutant freaks who dare oppose you. Once you become accustomed to the keyboard control, *Flashback* becomes an incredibly natural and compelling game experience. C'est magnifique!



Paris-based Delphine Software International (DSI) had its base close to the Champs Élysées. Founded in 1988, DSI game designs and developments were lead by Paul Cuisset until *Moto Racer* in 1997. By that year, the company had an impressive portfolio, including *Cruise For A Corpse*, *Another World*, *Flashback* and *Fade To Black*. After 1997 though, only a handful of *Moto Racer* games surfaced from the company – significantly, not enough to cover the production costs. Things really went tits-up at the beginning of 2004, and DSI folded in July of that year. Merde.

You can check out Kosta's abandonware website at www.abandonia.com



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STEVE HILL'S NeverQuest



Steve Hill takes to the skies in *City Of Villains*

I BELIEVE I can fly. I believe I can touch the sky. However, unlike ex-cruciating R'n'B crooner, R Kelly, and a thousand *X Factor* wannabees, I actually can. Look, there I am, soaring up above the streets and houses with a pair of yellow trousers and a shit-eating grin. And, crucially, a jetpack. As a festive treat, the powers that be have given every citizen of the Rogue Isles their very own portable flying machine for a period of 30 days. No more trudging the mean streets in danger of your life; simply take to the skies and fly, boy.

It's an inspired piece of social engineering, giving the lowly foot soldiers a fleeting glimpse of how the other half lives, and uniting the city in a Utopian ideal of affordable, convenient transport. And it's a right old laugh. Tentatively engaging the mechanism, the acceleration kicks in and I lurch skywards, my shiny pate buffeting against the wind as I leave a multi-coloured trail in my wake. Grinning like a mule, it's a gleeful experience, and as I get to grips with the controls I become more confident, swooping down from on high and scaring the living shit out of assorted criminals.

SNAKE EATER

Careering across the sky is a whole world of fun, and I only briefly return to earth to

set fire to a couple of tramps. The fun has to end some time though, as I have a job to do, namely ridding the world of reptiles typically having a scaly cylindrical limless body, fused eyelids and a jaw modified for swallowing large prey. Or snakes, as they are more commonly known.

Courtesy of my contact Mongoose – the relevance of whose name has finally struck me – I have yet another appointment down the snakehole. This involves a bit of a schlep, but thanks to the handy new jetpack, I'm there in a trice, smugly enjoying the newly-found superiority of pedestrian-turned-driver.

BILLY-NO-MATES

My recent reptilian engagements have been with the aid of trusty buddy Dr Robotnik and his army of robot soldiers, comfortably vanquishing any foe. But the Doc is nowhere to be seen and I have to face the threat alone, armed only with a flaming sword and the ability to produce fire from my knuckles. The snakes are vicious bastards as well, and, crucially, they are not few, they are legion. As in every zombie film ever made, it's the sheer weight of numbers that drags me down, and I soon find myself in the local hospital.

By the third time this happens, I'm beginning to lose interest. Seeking help,

human contact is thin on the ground until I come across a feisty young sort by the name of Lady Star. Sporting skin-tight camouflage, offset with a red beret, she looks like the supermodel offspring of Che Guevara, her mystery enhanced by the mute soldier who stalks her every move.

She's friendly enough though, offering a cursory, "Hi" and not even ridiculing my appearance. Accepting my offer to team up with the caveat, "I have not the jump pack so don't fly", her stilted diction adds to the exotic appeal (despite the fact that's she inevitably an illiterate 15-year-old boy).

Asking if I have a mission, I say: "Yep, follow me, got some snakes to kill", and set off on foot. Half a mile without a jetpack certainly makes you appreciate it, and I impatiently surge ahead. "I'm stick in you," calls out Lady Star, somewhat charmingly.

Sneaking through an alley, I witness two policemen beating a Rastafarian to death, but decide to turn a blind eye. After all, this is *City Of Villains*, not *City Of Heroes*. Besides, he probably looked at them in a funny way.

CARRY ON KILLING

Jumping down the snakehole, I shout, "Are you in?" to Lady Star, who eventually appears with her perennial sidekick just as I leave to go and look for them. Finally

organising ourselves, I wade into the hissing shits and am dead within minutes. Resuscitating myself, I heed Lady Star's terse advice to "be more careful next time" by hiding behind a rock. Peeking out, I find her flanked by a pair of heavies, with the explanation: "He two soldier now". Reverting to type, I casually suggest "they can spit-roast you", but she's already thinking the same, confidently declaring: "I will pull."

Mob-handed, the snakes are no match for our combination of firepower and fire, and we eradicate them from the cave. Having worked herself into a frenzy, Lady Star bids farewell, saying: "I have to quit team I have to do something for myself." Resisting the temptation to offer a hand, I leave her with my gratitude: "Thanks for f***ing those snakes over." **PCZ**

SUFFERING snakeskins!



AS Sinitta once sang, he's so macho.



Careering across the sky is a whole world of fun, only briefly returning to earth to set fire to a couple of tramps



A match made in heaven?



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WEBSITE thesims.ea.com
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The Sims: Superstar

The Sims: Makin' Magic



SORRY FOR SOUNDING like a slightly drunken best man at a wedding reception here, but what can we say about *The Sims* that hasn't already been said? We've known *The Sims* for as long as we can remember, since way before it was actually released in 2000, and in that time we've had our highs and we've had our lows. We've had the thick, and we've had quite a bit of the thin. When *The Sims* entered our worlds it was really special, let's admit it. Little computer people running around our screens, living their lives at your whim, raising a family, working hard at their careers to buy some new wallpaper – it was so strangely involving and utterly genius. We gave it 86 per cent, a score that's still accurate today, though we almost loathe admitting it.

Somewhere along the way we hit rough times though. The life simulator stopped being a bastion of originality and

instead became the bane of innovation, a massive Maxis cash cow with a dainty EA milkmaid tugging at its teats day-in day-out, filling up bucket after bucket with increasingly sour milk and shipping it out in big trucks.

HOW MANY?

By 2003, and a whole seven expansions later, everybody had a milk moustache. *The Sims* and its expansions straddled the charts, representing everything that's wrong with the industry, often denying far more deserving titles the number-one slot and always pushing more deserving titles out of the top ten. Everybody just kept on buying it thanks to EA's unstoppable marketing machine, and it quietly and unashamedly became the best-selling PC game of all time. It really was a phenomenal success, despite not being a phenomenal game.

Don't get us wrong, we don't hate *The Sims* for becoming so popular, we just don't enjoy seeing expansions with minimal content being released for the





THEY never notice the floaty diamond. Odd.



HE stops playing if a cowboy walks in.



THIS is the stuff of nightmares, isn't it?

sole reason of making another sack-load of cash, and it's a terrible shame that we have to inflict the reviewing responsibilities on our lowly staff writers.

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

But enough ranting, because EA has found another way to make more money from the series – *The Complete Collection Of The Sims*. It's such an amazingly obvious concept, it's almost insulting to see it sitting here on our desks. With the original game and every expansion released for it, *The Complete Collection*

But enough ranting – it's all too easy to be negative when faced with the series that's both sustaining and strangling the industry at the same time, like a facehugger. If you tried to remove *The Sims* from the industry, it would tighten its tendrils around the neck and kill the industry. But without removing it you'd wake up and be overcome with a hunger for more expansion packs, until eventually an alien bursts out of your chest and kills all of your other games, and your friends, and then one of your friends turns out to be an android. Then, as you beat the last

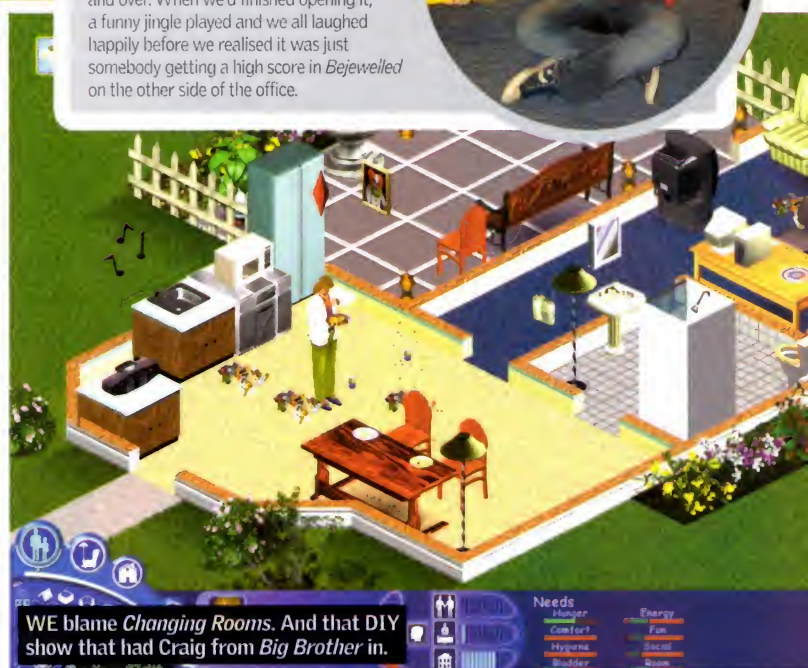
The Sims was a phenomenal success, despite not being a phenomenal game

hosts a whopping 12 CDs of *Sims* history. That's seven expansion packs and the original game, with an average *PC ZONE* score of 66 per cent – and the whole thing costs a mere £40.

Now, we'd like to call that a bargain, and yes, you're getting a lot of titles for your money. However, in reality we feel this is just proof that you had to be silly to pay full-price for an expansion pack every time Will Wright wanted a new yacht or an extra tennis court in his limousine.

diodes from his electronic brain, covering the place in horrible white goop, he'd tell you that *The Complete Collection Of The Sims* is actually part of a much larger conspiracy, one that goes all the way to the top. And that's why *The Sims* is like a facehugger.

But enough ranting (really). If you've never played *The Sims*, or you played it once and thought it was fun (there's no shame in it, *The Sims* is a fun game), or even if you owned the original and were



WE blame *Changing Rooms*. And that DIY show that had Craig from *Big Brother* in.

FOLD IT

The magical Jacob's Ladder-style unfolding CD case amazes



MY god – it's enormous!

This is definitely worth mentioning, because it's easily the most impressive thing about this boxset. The CD case which houses the expansions is like the one *Max Payne 2* came in – folding outwards like a book – except this one just keeps on opening, over and over. When we'd finished opening it, a funny jingle played and we all laughed happily before we realised it was just somebody getting a high score in *Bejewelled* on the other side of the office.



THE RAVAGES OF TIME

THE SIMS 2 **1st**

THE SIMS **2nd**

THE SIMS ONLINE **3rd**

As you can see, severe *Sims* ravaging has come in the form of the game's successor, *The Sims 2*, which improved on the original in every way.

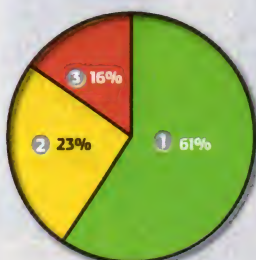
SUPERTEST

WWII GAMES

It's back to the front as the **ZONE** team discuss the merits of WWII games

YOUR VIEW

Last month's subject:
Which PC game features
the best tunes?



MAX PAYNE 2 **1st**

X2: THE THREAT **2nd**

HALF-LIFE 2 **3rd**

excaliburhc: "It has to be *Max Payne 2*. The music suited the mood of the game, from Mona singing in the shower to the end theme. Pure class."

madameye: "Music's there to create atmosphere and tension. It can change the mood of a scene and make a particular gaming moment more memorable. So with this in mind, I vote for *X2: The Threat*, because it just made me float away on a magic asteroid of ethereal vibes and cosmic love. Or was that the herbal tea?"

Jason_6780: "*Max Payne 2*'s top-notch musical score aids its top-notch cinematic pace. It has to be the winner."

moomooocow8: "Personally, I wouldn't vote for any of them as my heart is with *GTA: San Andreas*. The way the tracks are mastered to correspond to the sound of each radio station – like a tinny, high-end heavy sound on the country station, or a low-end boosted grimy feel to the hip hop station – is just pure genius."

THERE'S LITTLE DOUBT that, mutant robot apocalypses aside, WWII is the gaming industry's most popular theatre of war. Be it the Hollywood approach or a grittier, more visceral slant, WWII games have come in many guises and forms, though sadly we're yet to see any shell-making simulators or weapons-factory tycoon games. Still, we live in hope.

So, after much cogitation, we finally decided on a list of games worthy of discussion, only to change our minds half-way through and add in a couple more. Stacking up against each other were such behemoths as *Call Of Duty 2*, *Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault* and its predecessor *Allied Assault*, *Hidden & Dangerous 2*, *Brother In Arms: Earned In Blood*, *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* and the *Commandos* series.

The panel was formed from resident WWII expert Will Porter, who reviewed *COD2*, *MOH: Pacific Assault* and *Brothers In Arms: Earned In Blood*; new boys

Steve Hogarty and Andy Robinson; self-confessed WWII-lover Suzy 'WWII is my favourite war' Wallace; and finally, *PC ZONE* stalwart Martin Korda.

After close to half an hour of discussion and argument, a surprise winner emerged. You can find out who the victor was by listening to the recorded discussion on the DVD.

Want to have your say? Then why not head over to the *PC ZONE* forums at www.pczone.co.uk and post your comments on the Supertest 165 thread. Remember, don't hold back, we want your opinions. **PC**



CALL Of Duty 2:
Hollywood meets war.



H&D2: it's slow, strategic
and very, very hard.



TWO months of
incessant bullying has
taken its toll on Steve.



**After half an
hour, a surprise
winner emerged**



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DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

F.E.A.R.

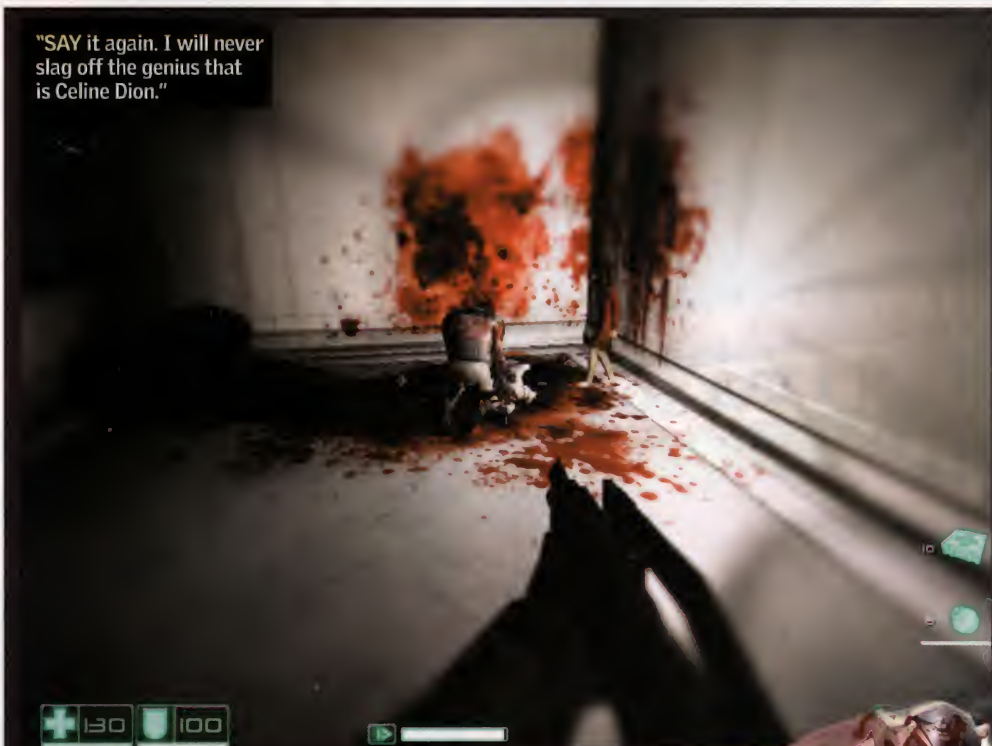


Be afraid, be very afraid. We grill developer Monolith to discover how it put the fear into *F.E.A.R.*

A **MAGNIFICENT**, ultra-violent pot-pourri of suspense, superior storytelling, scares and immense action, *F.E.A.R.* was one of 2005's games of the year. Just the tiniest glimpse of that spooky little girl made us quiver like... Well, a girl. But how did the Monolith team create such a monster shooter? We grabbed lead designer Craig Hubbard (on the left) and producer Jonathan Gramlich (on the right) for the full gory story. Warning: spoilers!



"SAY it again. I will never slag off the genius that is Celine Dion."



01 TALL STORY: Hubbard: "From the very earliest drafts of the story, we wanted to create a protagonist who wasn't defined, who could become the hero. We liked to play on the fact that you're coming into the game with no prior knowledge of what's going on and using that as part of the plot. We also wanted to justify your lack of understanding with the fact that you really don't have a history, which naturally seemed to suggest that you were artificial in some way. The rest of the elements – the relationship between you, the little girl Alma and Paxton Fettel – began to evolve after that, and we then figured out who the villains were and how they were tied together."



LOOKS like a flashpoint.



02 AI:

Gramlich:

"The secret of the AI is using clues in the environment so that enemies know what to do. Basically, the AI characters know where they can go and where they can't, and they have clues telling them how they can get to particular places by knocking something over for example, or going for cover and calling for backup. All of this stuff is invisible to you, but it's all there in the level for the enemies to use – there's a lot more of it than we've ever used in previous games, just to give the AI an unprecedented amount of choices to create a very dynamic experience of combat. I especially love it when they go around and try to flank you, when they find new routes or know when they're alone and call out to their friends for back-up. It's just so different every time you play, and I'm still surprised to this day just how well that worked out."



YOU mean he's? Is he really? Oooh...

03 SHOCK TACTICS: Hubbard: "One thing we wanted to do was steer away from the typical style of horror that's usually done in action games, like stuff jumping around the corner at you. We wanted to go for atmosphere and suspense, and the key to that was obviously the sound design. We wanted to create this rich sense of ambience in the environment, where it sounded like something was going to happen just because the tone of the world was eerie and unsettling. With the soundtrack, we wanted to stay away from recognisable musical motifs and go more for unsettling sound as a backdrop to the game. We also wanted to leave more to your imagination than we actually show you, because again I think that's more unsettling. We weren't aiming for a horror game as such that was going to terrify you; rather, one that was going to play with your imagination and then hopefully frighten you that way."

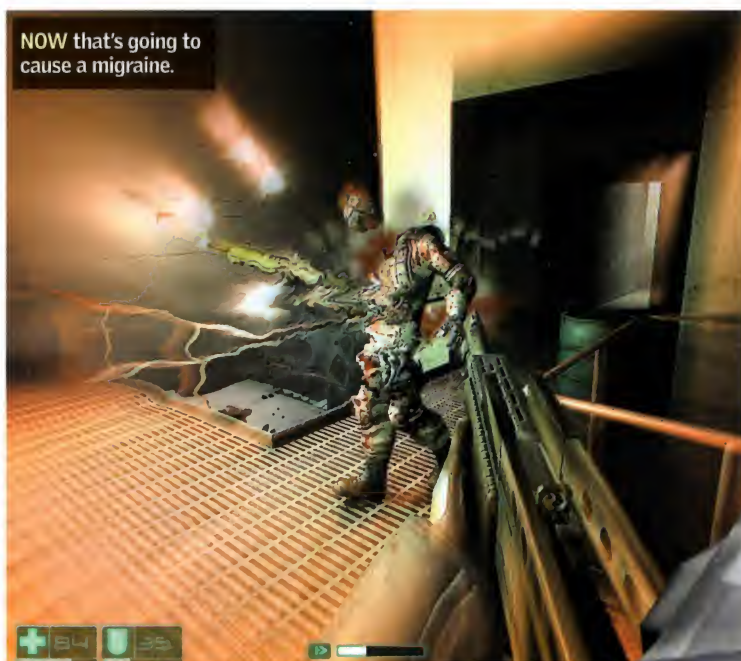
04 SLO-MO: Gramlich: "I'm absolutely thrilled with the way the bullet-time effects turned out. The first time we saw slo-mo really working was back in the E3 2004 demo – that's when we had a lot of glass getting put into the game and the AI was really starting to shine. You could really start to see all of the details from these combat scenarios with the slo-mo that you couldn't see without it – things like the smoke puffs, shattering glass, the sparks and AI pieces flying around everywhere. It adds so much more to an already great combat experience – I think it's one of the game's greatest elements."



SHOCKS come in mechanical form too.

We weren't aiming for horror – rather, we wanted to play with your imagination

Craig Hubbard, lead designer, *F.E.A.R.*



NOW that's going to cause a migraine.

05 VIOLENCE: Hubbard: "Personally, I really like stylised violence more than I like realistic violence. I really like what we did in *F.E.A.R.*, where it's very over-the-top and movie-like, not at all evening news-type violence. I prefer the whole samurai movie-type violence too, with the sword-slashing and exaggerated spraying of blood."

LOOKING BACK COMMENTARY



WOW, it's got Sat-Nav and everything.

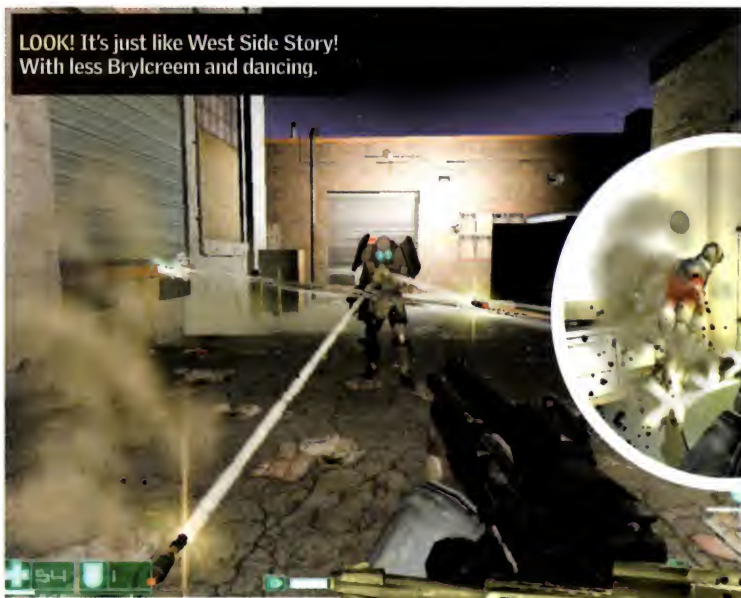
06 DELETED SCENE: Hubbard:

"Originally, we were going to start the game with a car chase sequence where you're in the passenger seat, but as we worked on *F.E.A.R.*, it quickly became apparent that it wasn't going to be as fun as we'd hoped, and that it was going to take a ton of work to pull it off and make it run well on our technology. Because of this, we abandoned that plan. Also, when we started working on it, there weren't many examples of it in other games, whereas by the time it had been prototyped, there were other games like *Medal Of Honor* that had sequences like that, so it was a lot less 'new' anyhow."

07 NORTON MAPES:

Hubbard: "I can neither confirm nor deny it was based on someone we know! Part of the reason I wanted to add him was because I felt that there were all of these big enemies and very dangerous threats that you're dealing with. So we wanted to have a monkey wrench in the gears, a sort of personal demon for you – this guy who would just show up and complicate situations. Also, we wanted to give you a break – it was an attempt at some sort of light relief."

LOOK! It's just like *West Side Story*! With less *Brylcreem* and dancing.



08 MODS: Gramlich:

"One thing we've learned is that we really don't know what to expect from the mod community – we see a lot of great things coming out already and really, we're excited just to see what the *F.E.A.R.* fans come up with. Who knows what they can imagine and put out there – we're just really eager to see it and try it once they're done with it."

Hubbard: "Our Software Development Kit (SDK) is very data-driven too, which means you have a lot of power over the content of the game, which should give the mod community a lot of opportunity to make cool stuff without having to really dig into the source code."



09

MULTIPLAYER: Gramlich: "Our previous games, such as *No One Lives Forever*, were a bit behind the technology curve in the multiplayer department. They had some serious lag issues, so we needed to figure out what was wrong, fix it and create a really solid multiplayer experience – something we could build upon in the future. I think we did a good job with *F.E.A.R.*. We concentrated on standard modes so that we could make sure it felt and looked really good, and also that the multiplayer combat was as intense as in the single-player game. I think we really did succeed in that area – the multiplayer combat is very visceral and exciting. However, the main problem was that we had to get up to the high standards of other games out there, which didn't leave us a lot of time to experiment with new things. Now, I think we have a much better baseline to start from going forward – we definitely feel that we're in a better position to try out new things for the next Monolith titles and there are a lot of great ideas going around here."

When the slo-mo, the AI and the effects all came together, we knew we had a hit on our hands

Jonathan Gramlich, producer, *F.E.A.R.*



10

STAND-OUT DEVELOPMENT MOMENTS:

Gramlich: "The E3 2004 demo was really the point where everyone on the team started to see the results of all their hard work. A week or two before E3 things were just starting to come together, so we sat down in the conference room and Craig sat down and played through the game while we all watched. I personally was in awe – I couldn't believe how cool this thing was turning out! The slo-mo was just getting in there, the AI was really coming together, the effects worked – we all knew right then that we had a hit on our hands." Hubbard: "For me, it was probably at the end of the project when I finally put the finishing touches on the ending, which we wanted to be one of the biggest moments of the game. We spent the entire project trying out different ideas to make the ending as cool as possible, but nothing we tried measured up to what we wanted. So eventually, it made sense just to have a huge explosion at the end. Our art and effects guy is very good at particle stuff, so he prototyped something early on and it just looked great. The moment when I integrated that into the game was really rewarding." **PCZ**



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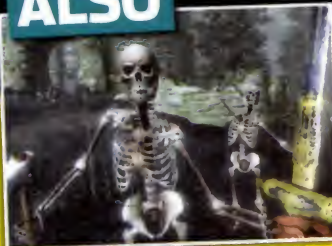
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DOMINIK DIAMOND

I've been doing this column for over half a year and still no mention of games on TV, which is probably what they wanted me to do in the first place. Let's go rectifying-daft then, shall we?



I'VE JUST LAUNCHED a new radio station called xfm Scotland, sister station to those trendy indie rock stations in London and soon-to-be Manchester. I don't mean that I myself spunked £35 million for the licence and wired up a pair of Pioneer decks to my Alienware. No. I mean that as host of the Breakfast Show, I got to say the first words on the station.

It was tricky summing up why you give such a shit about something in a funny, interesting way, and the more I thought about it, the more I tried to work out why it is that while sales of computer games outstrip sales of music, there are still no new radio and TV shows fighting over each other to display *Half-Life 2* in the way they are Babyshambles. I used to think people didn't feel as passionately about games as music, but then I tried to get my daughter to stop playing *Super Mario Sunshine* when she was on the final Bowser.

So why no telly shows? Viewers in Scotland have just been treated to a late-night work of genius called *videoGaiden*. It's original, funny, passionate and – most importantly for any truly great TV show about videogames – self-indulgent to the point that there's always an in-joke you'll only get if you've watched from the beginning. (Check out the BBC Scotland website for more.)

SHAMBOLIC

But there's just not enough people who think watching people talk about games is as interesting as watching them debate Pete Doherty. Some men (myself among them) can get middling erections discussing *Pro Evo* versus *FIFA*, but a far greater proportion of the British public have an opinion about Coldplay. So, the *only* way you're going to get computer games on the telly in 2006 is to hijack an established TV genre. Here are some examples


Have a plotline in a soap. Martin Fowler starts playing online RPGs. As a result, the boundaries between life and reality get

blurred so that he starts treating Albert Square as if it was *EverQuest*. Things take a turn for the worst when he tries to smote Phil Mitchell with the Mace of Broccoli, only for Phil to f*** him right up with the Pipe of Exhaust.

Or you could have a computer-based reality show. *Big Brother*. But set in *The Sims*. Think that sounds dead boring and shit? So's the game, but people still buy it in their sheepdroves.

A videogames special in Gordon Ramsay's *The F Word*, in which he prepares pizza and home-baked kettle chips for a bunch of hungry lads smoking dope and playing *Champ Man 27*? Then they deep-fry him when Altrincham fail to win the UEFA Cup.

Why not become part of Sky News? Have re-enactments of the latest insurgency car-bombing in Iraq brought to you by the programmers of *Counter-Strike*?

Or have a special computer games Bush Tucker Trial in *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here*, in which Jilly Goolden has to trawl through an underground lair full of Funnelweb spiders, only to step on a pressure pad and have 3.5 tons of Alienware PC come crashing down on her gonk head? Only don't look at me to present it – I'm far too busy listening to records to f*** around playing stupid games... 

**Some men
(myself
among
them) can
get middling
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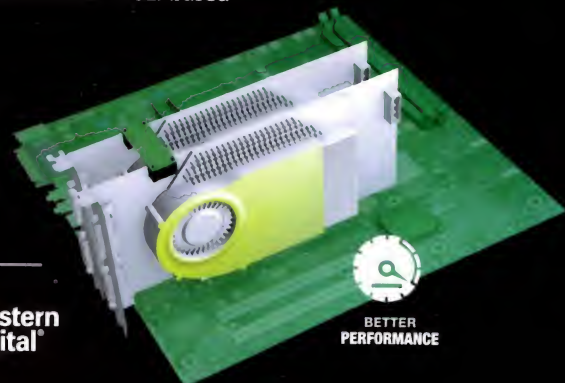
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